

St Joseph Catholic Primary School

Ainsdale Road, South Oxhey, Watford, Hertfordshire WD19 7DW

Inspection dates

28 February–1 March 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher provides outstanding leadership. Her particularly clear vision and high expectations have ensured that this outstanding school is continually improving.
- The school's other leaders share the headteacher's vision and are equally committed to achieving it. They provide very strong support to the headteacher and ensure that the school's success is not dependent on her alone.
- The governing body is highly effective. Governors know the school extremely well and they have a good range of skills and experience. Governors balance the need to support leaders with the need to hold them to account extremely well.
- Outcomes for pupils are outstanding. In the 2016 national tests pupils' progress was significantly above average, and in the top 10% nationally, in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Much of pupils' work is presented to a very high standard. Where this is the case, pupils take great care with their handwriting and set their work out particularly carefully.
- There is some variation in the quality of presentation between classes. Some work is not presented to the same very high standard as others.
- Pupils behave exceptionally well. Teachers' expectations of how pupils should conduct themselves are very high and pupils respond accordingly. As a result, disruption in lessons is extremely rare and little learning time is lost.
- Pupils are polite, friendly and well mannered. They are respectful towards adults and towards each other. The school's emphasis on good manners is clearly evident in the way pupils behave.
- Teaching is highly effective. Teachers and teaching assistants work closely together and form effective teams. Lessons are planned very well to meet pupils' individual needs.
- The early years provision gets children's school careers off to an outstanding start. The high focus on developing children's communication and language skills is particularly effective.
- Staff in the early years quickly establish good relationships with parents. They make themselves easily available to parents in order for them to raise concerns or talk about their children.
- Parents are not as involved as they could be in the assessment of their children's learning in the early years.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise expectations for the presentation of pupils' work even further so that it is of the same very high standard throughout the school.
- Extend and develop parents' involvement in the assessment of their children's learning in the early years.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher is a highly effective leader whose personal impact on the continual improvement of this school cannot be overstated. She has absolute clarity of vision about how she wants the school to be and is single-minded in her determination to achieve that vision. As a result, the overall effectiveness of the school is now outstanding.
- The headteacher has gained the respect, admiration and trust of the entire school community. There were no negative responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and many parents chose to write positive comments. One parent summed up the thoughts of many by saying, 'Mrs Payne is an excellent headteacher whose first priority is always the children in her care.'
- The headteacher is absolutely determined that disadvantage must not limit ambition. She has ensured that her belief affects every aspect of the school's work. Leaders, staff and governors are highly ambitious for every pupil at the school. The extremely high expectations, for both pupils' behaviour and their achievements, result in pupils behaving impeccably and progress being among some of the highest in the country this year.
- The deputy headteacher and the rest of the senior leadership team are highly effective. Their vision, knowledge and skills ensure that the school's success is sustainable and does not depend entirely on the strength of the headteacher. The school's senior leaders have an excellent understanding of what needs to be done to ensure that the school continues to improve.
- The staff who lead areas of the curriculum are also very effective. They understand and carry out their leadership roles extremely well. Leaders ensure that the same high standards are applied to all areas of the school's curriculum. They monitor their subjects closely and take appropriate action, where necessary, to ensure that they continue to improve.
- Staff are highly committed to the school and its aims. Responses to Ofsted's staff survey were universally positive and included comments such as, 'I am proud to be a member of staff' and 'I am very lucky to be working in such a wonderful school with such supportive, caring colleagues.' This positivity and commitment has a direct impact on pupils, both in terms of their behaviour and their attitudes to learning.
- The quality of teaching is monitored particularly effectively and is continually improving as a result. The headteacher's mantra in monitoring teachers' work is that 'I am here to develop you, I'm not here to catch you out.' Teachers know and believe this and this makes the school a positive place to work, where staff are continually striving to improve their own and others' practice.
- The pupil premium funding is spent extremely effectively. Disadvantaged pupils achieve very well at St Joseph's. The longer they attend the school, the better they do. Leaders and governors monitor spending very carefully. They check that the additional funding is effective in ensuring that disadvantaged pupils make the more rapid progress necessary to diminish differences between their attainment and that of other pupils.

- Additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used very effectively. A small team of leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator, take responsibility for ensuring that funding is used well. Their regular monitoring ensures that this group of pupils make the progress that they should.
- The primary physical education (PE) and sport premium is spent effectively. For example, the employment of a specialist sports teacher has helped to raise standards in PE and to improve the quality of teaching in the subject by non-specialists. The funding has also been used to increase the number and range of sports clubs on offer. Every pupil in key stage 1 and key stage 2 now has the opportunity to attend a sports club. The school has obtained a nationally recognised gold mark for school games in recognition of its achievements in PE and sport.
- The school's curriculum is broad and balanced, covering all the subjects in the national curriculum. Teachers' individual specialisms and expertise are used well to ensure that there is good coverage of each subject and that expectations of pupils' progress are high enough. The curriculum's emphasis on developing pupils' communication and language skills has a clear impact on their achievement and how well they are prepared for the next stage of the educational careers.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is highly effective. The school's designation as a Catholic faith school is very important to governors, staff and pupils. The beliefs attached to being a faith school are used as the foundations on which to build pupils' broader beliefs and to teach them about fundamental British values. For example, when discussing religious and racial diversity with the lead inspector, one pupil said that 'it doesn't matter who you are, we are all brothers and sisters'.

Governance of the school

- The school's governors are knowledgeable and well informed. Governors have a wide range of backgrounds and experiences, providing a good mix of the skills necessary for a governing body to be effective in its duties.
- Governors know about and understand published data and the school's own assessment information. They use this information competently to help them to know how well the school is doing. They sensibly use the local authority's improvement adviser's visits and reports to check that the information they are given is accurate.
- The governing body holds the school's leaders to account very well. Minutes of governing body meetings show clearly that governors routinely ask challenging questions of leaders when they are presented with information. In a meeting with the lead inspector, governors commented that leaders welcome challenge, saying, 'They don't take it as a criticism, they take it as something constructive.' This mutual trust and respect, combined with a shared, aspirational vision, is a strong contributory factor in the school's success.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Robust and well-organised systems are in place to ensure that only suitable people are

employed to work with children. The school's single central record of pre-employment checks is maintained well and contains all the required information.

- Detailed and thorough records are kept of child protection concerns. The designated safeguarding leads take timely action, where necessary, in response to concerns raised by staff. The school's well-kept records mean that repeated concerns are identified and acted upon promptly, providing a strong safety net for more vulnerable pupils.
- The school's leaders, governors and staff have all received training about the 'Prevent' duty and what their responsibilities are in tackling extremism and preventing radicalisation. Leaders and governors show good understanding of how the 'Prevent' duty applies in the context of the school's community.
- The very strong relationships between staff and pupils, combined with the school's open culture, play a key role in helping to ensure that pupils are safe at St Joseph's. Pupils know that they can talk to staff about any problems or worries that they might have. They also have great faith that staff can and will help them if the need should ever arise.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- The quality of teaching is continually improving in the school because every member of staff is absolutely committed to making it the very best it can be. Teachers are very clear that the school's headteacher plays a key role in improving teaching. Teachers used words such as 'fantastic', 'positive' and 'inspiring' to describe the headteacher but also said that 'she is not afraid to tell you something that needs to improve'. This balance of enormously valuing and supporting staff, alongside having particularly high expectations, is extremely effective.
- Teachers' knowledge of the subjects they teach is very strong. This means that they are able to provide very clear explanations about the subjects that they teach. The school's leaders use teachers' degree subjects well to ensure that there is an 'expert' available to lead or support individual subjects wherever possible.
- Classroom routines are very well established. Pupils know what is expected of them and what they are supposed to do at different points during the day. As a result, transitions between parts of lessons, and between lessons and playtimes, are seamless and very little learning time is lost.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have very high expectations of pupils, both in terms of how they behave and how hard they should try. Pupils respond extremely well to these high expectations and both outcomes and behaviour are outstanding as a result.
- Teachers plan their teaching extremely effectively and focus very clearly on the objectives they want to achieve in lessons. They recognise that different pupils prefer different ways of learning. They plan approaches and activities that accommodate a wide range of learning styles. Pupils show enormous interest in the subjects they are taught because teachers meet their individual needs particularly well.
- Similarly, teachers plan well for the different abilities within their classes. Assessment is regular and thorough. Teachers know their pupils extremely well and this enables them to plan their teaching effectively. Teachers ensure that there is appropriate challenge

for different ability groups and that support is provided where it is needed.

- Teaching assistants are used very effectively to improve outcomes for individual pupils. Their work is planned well and they are highly competent in their roles. Teachers and teaching assistants work closely together and form effective teams. Teaching assistants have a clear impact both on how well pupils take part in lessons and on the progress they make.
- Useful links are made between subjects when appropriate. For example, as the school is a faith school, religious education has a strong emphasis within its curriculum. Teachers are very effective in using the additional religious education time as an opportunity to develop pupils' writing skills further.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The school's religious character has a particularly high profile at St Joseph's. Pupils are taught to use their Catholic faith to help them to be good citizens in modern Britain. They are told that love is central to their faith and that they should value all people, regardless of their race, religion or any other characteristics. As a result, pupils show extremely welcoming and tolerant attitudes to other people.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning. Their can-do attitudes help them to achieve well. They love coming to school and are keen to do well. Pupils enjoy the subjects that they learn about and are keen to talk about their work. They do their best because they are encouraged to do so and because they want to succeed. Some pupils' work is presented to a notably high standard.
- Pupils are rightly proud of their school. This pride is reflected in the way pupils behave around the school, in the way they speak to adults and each other. The school is an orderly, productive place as a result.
- Pupils feel very safe at St Joseph's. Bullying is something that rarely happens but pupils have complete faith in staff to sort things out quickly if it does occur. Pupils know what bullying is and the different forms that it can take. They have been taught to tell if bullying occurs and they know that it is something that they should not keep to themselves.
- Pupils are taught to keep themselves safe in a number of ways. For example, they regularly learn about e-safety and how to use the internet safely. Visits from a police officer help them to learn about road safety and how to stay safe in the local community.
- There is some variation in the quality of presentation between classes. While no presentation is poor, some is not of the same very high standard as others. Where this is the case, handwriting is less well developed and less care is taken to ensure that work is neat and tidy.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils know and follow the school's rules very closely. Pupils' behaviour in classrooms is exemplary. They listen carefully to staff, respond quickly to instructions and follow the rules. As a result, it is very rare for learning time to be lost as a result of poor behaviour.
- The school's system of rewards and sanctions is clear and followed closely. Pupils know what is and is not acceptable behaviour. They know what the consequences are of rules being broken and they have faith in staff to apply the system fairly. For example, in a meeting with the lead inspector, pupils were very clear that a racist incident would result in a 'straight code 5', reflecting the seriousness with which it would be taken.
- Pupils' manners are impeccable. Without exception, pupils are highly respectful towards adults. They routinely say 'please' and 'thank you', hold doors open and politely say 'pardon' if they have not heard. Pupils are welcoming and friendly, and keen to talk about their work and their learning. They are a credit to their school.
- The vast majority of pupils attend school regularly and on time. As a result, overall attendance is similar to the national average. The school takes a strong stance against unnecessary absence. Firm and effective action is taken where attendance is not good enough. For example, the attendance of pupils who are eligible for free school meals has improved to be broadly in line with the national average as a result of the actions taken.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils make outstanding progress during their time at St Joseph's. Children enter the school's nursery with skills and abilities that are well below what is typical of their age. By the time they leave the school at the end of Year 6, pupils have caught up with expectations for their age. This means that pupils are in a good position to move on to secondary school.
- In the 2016 national tests, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in each of reading, writing and mathematics was just above the national average. The proportion who reached the higher level in all three subjects was also just above the national average.
- In 2016, the progress that pupils made between the end of key stage 1 and the end of key stage 2 was significantly above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. In all three subjects, the progress pupils made was in the highest 10% of all schools nationally.
- The school's assessment information shows that pupils throughout the school make substantial and sustained progress across a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics. The work in pupils' exercise books confirms this excellent progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils are provided for particularly well at St Joseph's. Expectations for what disadvantaged pupils can and should achieve are very high. The school does not accept that any barriers can prevent pupils from achieving well. Instead, difficulties are treated as simply a series of hurdles that need to be jumped over. As a result,

disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, make excellent progress throughout the school.

- The most able pupils make excellent progress and achieve very well. In 2016, in writing and mathematics, the most able pupils made progress that was significantly greater than the national average and in the highest 10% in the country.
- The teaching of phonics is highly effective. From very low starting points in the early years, pupils make rapid progress. The proportion of pupils that achieved the expected level in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been at least in line with the national average for the last three years.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make excellent progress. Their needs are identified quickly and action is taken at an early stage to address them. For example, the school uses a supplementary reading programme that it has found to greatly increase the rate of progress that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- The early years provision is led very effectively. The school's leaders have identified the strengths and areas for development in the early years very accurately. Their expectations are very high and the provision is continually improving as a result.
- Children enter the school's nursery with skills and abilities that are well below those that are typical of their age. Similarly, some children enter the Reception Year at a similarly low level. Many children enter the school with communication and language skills that are well below those that are typical of their age.
- The proportion of children who reach a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year is typically similar to the national average. A lower than average proportion achieved a good level of development in 2016 but this was as a result of issues specific to this group of children rather than being indicative of a fall in standards.
- Staff focus very well on developing children's speech and language skills in the early years and children make rapid progress as a result. The focus on extending children's vocabulary and developing their communication skills continues successfully throughout the school. As a result, children are prepared well to move on to Year 1 at the end of the Reception Year.
- Assessment is very well developed in the early years. Staff work closely with staff in other schools and in pre-schools to ensure that the accuracy of their judgements about children's attainment and progress match those in other settings. Assessment is used very well to plan teaching to meet children's specific needs.
- The outstanding teaching in the early years is highly effective. Tasks are extremely well chosen to meet the needs and interests of all children. The staff work particularly well together as a team.
- Children learn the school's rules very quickly and respond extremely well to staff's very high expectations. Children's behaviour is exemplary. They are kind and thoughtful towards each other, and polite to adults. Children respond quickly to the instructions

they are given.

- Safety is given a very high priority in the early years. Leaders have carried out a full assessment of the physical environment and the procedures to ensure that children are kept safe at all times.
- Parents and staff work closely together. Parents have plentiful opportunities to speak with school staff, whether to share worries and concerns or to talk about their child's learning.
- The school is aware that parents' involvement in the assessment of their children's learning is not yet fully developed. Although parents do see and contribute to their children's learning journeys, this area is not fully developed.

School details

Unique reference number	117465
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10023421

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	235
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Adrian Ramsden
Headteacher	Linda Payne
Telephone number	020 8428 5371
Website	www.stjosephs775.herts.sch.uk
Email address	admin@stjosephs775.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	26–27 April 2012

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- This is an average-sized primary school. The school provides part-time sessions in its nursery class. Pupils attend the Reception class full time from September of the year in which they become of statutory school age.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is similar to the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above the national average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average.

- The school meets current floor standards. These are the minimum standards set by the government for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching and learning over time. Inspectors observed parts of 16 lessons, some jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors looked closely at the work in pupils' exercise books. They listened to pupils read and talked to them about their work.
- Inspectors looked at a range of the school's documents including assessment information.
- Inspectors checked the school's single central record of pre-employment checks and other documentation concerned with the safer recruitment of staff and volunteers.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and other leaders, a group of pupils, governors and staff. Inspectors spoke with pupils throughout the day and with parents before school in the morning. The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority on the telephone and another in person.
- Inspectors took into account 71 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, seven responses to the pupil questionnaire, and 15 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Wendy Varney, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Terry Flitman	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Hughes	Ofsted Inspector

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