

Inspection of an outstanding school: St Joseph Catholic Primary School

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

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 June 2023

Outcome

St Joseph Catholic Primary School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at St Joseph's are really proud of their school. The simple school rule, to 'be kind', is understood, followed and applied to all situations by pupils and adults. This means that pupils feel safe.

Pupils respond to staff's high expectations. They behave extremely well at all times. Pupils take responsibility for their actions and show respect for all others because they understand that this makes a safe and productive school. Incidents of low-level negative behaviour are rare and bullying is not allowed.

The broad and rich curriculum develops pupils' interests and talents. They learn high-level skills from well-trained staff. Pupils are consistently highly motivated and show a positive attitude to their learning. Consequently, pupils learn all the skills they need to be ready for the next stage in their education.

All pupils take part in the school's extensive wider development opportunities. These greatly enhance the learning that pupils do in the classroom. Pupils learn to celebrate differences and that all pupils are unique. Pupils of all ages have different jobs around the school. They carry these out with maturity.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have developed well-constructed and ambitious curriculum plans. These detail the small steps of knowledge that pupils need to learn in every subject. This means that all staff understand how pupils' learning develops and how they can help pupils build their knowledge appropriately. Leaders create links between subjects to enable pupils to remember more. For example, learning technical language and knowledge from art and science helps to improve pupils' reading comprehension. These links are made clear to staff. In this carefully structured way, pupils' knowledge develops from strong foundations so that pupils achieve exceptionally well.

Staff have a shared understanding of how to teach each subject because they are well trained. This means that teachers can provide considerable clarity in their explanations to pupils. During lessons, teachers check pupils' understanding regularly and they skilfully address misconceptions. This means that most pupils can 'keep up' in every lesson.

Reading has the highest priority across the school. All staff are relentless in their drive to make sure that all the pupils have the skills they need to read with independence. Pupils in Reception begin to learn to read as soon as they start school. Pupils' reading knowledge is checked often. This allows teachers to adapt and change their planning to match pupils' needs. No pupils are left behind and any pupils who need more time to practise reading have this.

Pupils learn a variety of ways to be able to talk well and use accurate grammar. Leaders understand that this is essential to help pupils to be able to write well. This process begins in the early years, where staff are skilled at creating engaging activities that excite the children. Staff use this interest and every interaction to extend pupils' language development. The early years prepares pupils well for their learning in Year 1.

Leaders and staff have a thorough understanding of how pupils' learning develops. They use this to identify pupils' learning needs accurately. Leaders then use this information to plan and action ways to address any barriers to learning that pupils might have. Some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported by external services that provide more individualised support. As with others, pupils with SEND experience high levels of success in their learning.

Pupils show high levels of respect for each other by listening and being considerate. They are very positive about their education, knowing that challenging work will help them learn successfully. They know how important it is to work hard because they will learn more and this will help them as adults.

Leaders' well-thought-out personal development programme prepares pupils well for their futures. They learn many skills that help them to know how to behave in a wide variety of situations. They learn that being kind to everyone is very important, and they develop their own understanding of right and wrong. Pupils love the school's trips and visitors that help them make sense of the world and develop into well-rounded members of society.

Leaders, governors and staff work together and share the same aims and visions. Governors and leaders make sure that staff are supported with workload and have all the resources they need to carry out their roles well, including receiving highly effective and ongoing training and support.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are well trained and understand how to identify pupils who may be at risk. Staff use the clear school systems to report any concerns quickly. Leaders act on concerns in a timely manner.

Leaders make sure that staff have regular and ongoing training so that pupils' safety has the highest priority. Leaders work closely with external services and provide compassionate support for pupils.

Pupils understand how to stay safe online and in the community. For example, they know how to identify a scam text and how to stay safe when playing in the park.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in March 2017.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	117465
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10255133
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 of governing body	Adrian Ramsden
Headteacher	Linda Payne
Website	www.stjosephs775.herts.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	28 February and 1 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has a Catholic religious character. The school's most recent section 48 inspection took place in July 2017. The school's next section 48 inspection will be within eight school years.
- Leaders do not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector spoke to leaders and viewed a range of documents and information, including minutes of governing body meetings, school policies, and documentation and records relating to safeguarding.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in three subjects: early reading, mathematics and art. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Meetings were held with the headteacher, who is also the designated safeguarding lead. The inspector spoke with some members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. The inspector also held a meeting with the local authority representative.
- The inspector considered the responses made by parents to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. The inspector met with a range of staff.

Inspection team

Jessie Linsley, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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