

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Gardenia Avenue, Luton, Bedfordshire LU3 2NS

Inspection dates

17–18 October 2017

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	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and her senior leadership team are effective leaders. Their desire and determination to improve the school are shared by staff and governors alike.
- Leaders have managed the expansion of the junior school skilfully for the benefit of all pupils and the local community.
- Pupils are proud to be members of this friendly and welcoming school. They take a real pride in their achievements and approach their work with determination and enthusiasm.
- Leaders of all subjects are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their subjects. They understand how their work affects the overall performance of the school and pupils' achievement.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. Parents agree that the school is a safe place and that they receive accurate information about their child's progress. The school has high expectations of pupils and their behaviour.
- The school's curriculum contains varied and motivating activities that inspire pupils to learn. Teaching that is linked to real-life contexts gives relevance to pupils' learning.
- Questioning by teachers and teaching assistants is strong throughout the school. It helps pupils to think deeply and understand their learning.
- Pupils are extremely well behaved around school and in lessons. They value the work their teachers do and feel very much part of a school family.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils are catching up with their classmates and receive work suited to their needs.
- Children in the early years get off to a very good start. They make strong progress as a result of effective teaching, strong leadership and effective support for the children and their families.
- Good-quality teaching has led to improved standards in the early years and in phonics in Year 1.
- At times, teachers do not provide sufficient challenge across the curriculum for the most able pupils. As a result, too few pupils achieve the higher standards.
- The quality of teachers' feedback in some lessons is inconsistent, most notably in writing and mathematics. Pupils' repeated errors go unchecked in some year groups.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes for pupils by accurately identifying and effectively sharing exactly what pupils need to do to excel in writing and mathematics.
- Strengthen teaching, learning and assessment so that teaching is consistently highly effective by providing the most able pupils with the challenge they need to deepen and extend their thinking so that more of these pupils work at greater depth and exceed national standards.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and her senior leadership team are ambitious for pupils and staff. Since the school expanded in January 2015, the leadership team's capacity has also developed and grown to meet the needs of an increasing number of pupils.
- Staff morale is high and staff embrace opportunities to develop their practice. The performance management of staff is closely linked to the priorities of the school development plan. Staff told inspectors that leaders have created a 'culture of support and challenge'. Staff training is tailored to meet individual needs and, as a result, the quality of teaching is consistently good across the school.
- Senior leaders challenge teachers to demonstrate that all pupils are making progress. If any pupil appears to be falling behind, teachers take swift action to fill in gaps of missing knowledge and skills. Governors, in turn, challenge senior leaders about the progress of pupils in each class.
- Senior leaders regularly check the quality of teaching and provide feedback that helps teachers and support staff improve. Where teaching has not been good in the past, leaders have provided additional support that has ensured that it has improved. Leaders set teachers sharp targets and take the quality of teaching into account when making decisions about any pay awards. Leaders are aware that teachers are not yet consistently highly effective across the school.
- Leadership of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is strong. Special educational needs funding is spent effectively. The coordinators are very reflective and evaluate provision rigorously. Along with strong partnerships with families, this enables leaders to have an insightful view of pupils' specific, and often complex, needs.
- The system of assessment allows leaders to evaluate accurately the step-by-step progress pupils make. Leaders previously identified that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities needed further support to help them to make the progress they should. They are now monitoring learning more regularly to review the impact of teaching and adapt it as required for this group of pupils.
- Subject leaders monitor their subjects well and take decisive action to bring about improvement. For example, they have made changes to the teaching of reading by introducing a 'reading race' from Reception to Year 6. As a result, pupils are reading widely and often, which is having a positive impact on raising reading standards.
- Leaders carry out detailed analysis of pupils' progress and outcomes in order to ensure that they identify and tackle any gaps in pupils' learning effectively. Positive progress is made towards pupils attaining the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics, including for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The progress of the most able pupils is not as strong, in particular for writing and mathematics. This is because leaders do not always ensure that all staff consistently follow the school's feedback policy when it comes to this group of pupils. As a result,

most-able pupils are not always challenged in the feedback to do better.

- Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the needs of pupils. It ensures that pupils have access to first-hand experiences that enrich their knowledge and understanding. For example, recent trips to Windsor Castle provided valuable opportunities to develop pupils' understanding of the Royal Family. The curriculum promotes pupils' personal development strongly in order to equip them for the next stages in their education.
- Leaders have ensured that fundamental British values are strongly woven throughout the curriculum. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is catered for well. Pupils have a good understanding of the rule of law, democracy (through the election of their faith ambassadors and school councillors), respect (through the rights of the child) and the breadth of modern British culture. Pupils recently visited 10 Downing Street and enthusiastically told inspectors about democracy in the United Kingdom. Pupils celebrate a wide range of faiths and cultures and were observed learning about Black history.
- The school uses the primary sports funding well. A specialist coach provides sessions for pupils and supports staff to successfully develop their skills. Pupils have the opportunity to experience different activities, including tennis and Zumba dancing. During a key stage 2 assembly, pupils celebrated a recent footballing achievement.
- The additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is well spent. Leaders have a sound rationale for the allocation of funds and have accurately identified the barriers to learning for these pupils. Across the year groups, disadvantaged pupils currently in the school make good progress.
- The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Parent View and the school's own most recent survey, as well as many of the parents who spoke to inspectors, were highly supportive of the school. They particularly praised the pastoral care and appreciated the way staff know each pupil as an individual. One parent's comment about 'a diverse and harmonious school' summed up the views of many.
- A local authority adviser provides effective support to leaders. As a consequence, much progress has been made in tackling the school's areas for improvement which are identified in the school development plan. Leaders have actively sought advice from the local authority following the recent dip in writing progress at key stage 2 in 2017.

Governance of the school

- Governors bring a wealth of relevant knowledge, skills and expertise to their positions. Governors analyse and understand the school's strengths and areas for development. They also ensure that performance targets are challenging and are monitored effectively.
- Governors are jointly and actively involved in school improvement. They are committed to the ethos and values of the school. They share responsibility for creating a secure governance structure. Together, they provide a good balance of support, challenge and advice so that leaders are held to account and take the necessary actions to improve.
- Governors have a very good understanding of the school's safeguarding procedures and receive a broad range of appropriate training and updates.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders recognise that many children are vulnerable and they work closely with families and outside agencies to ensure that pupils are kept safe. There is a clear and timely system of referral. Leaders take appropriate steps to manage issues or refer them on to external agencies when necessary.
- Staff and governors receive regular and appropriate training, for example training to recognise the signs of radicalisation and extremism. The safeguarding leaders display a very good awareness of how this training relates to the community the school serves.
- Records are kept securely and provide a clear trail of emerging concerns, follow-up actions and review procedures. The clarity and detail of record-keeping help leaders to evaluate the impact of safeguarding and determine whether further support is needed.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers use good subject knowledge to plan work correctly according to pupils' interests, skills and abilities. Teachers plan work which supports pupils' good progress across the curriculum.
- Pupils develop highly positive attitudes to learning because relationships with staff are strong. Adults encourage pupils to 'have a go' and reinforce the message that they should work without fear of failure. Consequently, pupils willingly try new things, confident that their teachers and learning support assistants will help them if they go wrong or get stuck.
- Teachers and support staff use questioning successfully to move learning on and to check what pupils already know and can do. Staff were observed challenging pupils' reasoning and seeking further explanations. As a result, pupils are able to articulate their answers and improve their knowledge, understanding and skills.
- Teachers have high expectations of what pupils should achieve and how they should behave. They use various methods to make learning interesting, for example through good use of resources, such as modern technology, and practical activities. This was observed when Year 6 pupils demonstrated the flow of electricity using their fellow pupils as components. As a result, pupils made strong progress and could answer complex questions about electrical circuits.
- Learning support assistants are deployed well, especially when working with pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They sensitively help pupils to improve their skills and knowledge and contribute to the positive ethos and the progress being made by pupils.
- In many classes, pupils are engaged and enthused by their learning because the work set is stimulating and excites them. For example, Year 6 pupils wrote a newspaper article about the story of 'Romeo and Juliet'. They enthusiastically retold the story and said how much they had enjoyed it. One pupil commented, 'They make it fun, but still make you learn.' As a result, pupils made strong progress in the lesson.
- Teaching in subjects other than English and mathematics gives pupils opportunities to develop new skills and knowledge. Tasks are well planned to meet the needs of pupils

and provide challenge in most year groups. Consequently, most pupils make similar progress in these subjects as they do in English and mathematics. In particular, history, geography, French, music and religious education are taught well.

- Phonics is taught effectively as soon as pupils start school and the teaching of reading is strong. This gives younger pupils a solid foundation upon which to develop their love of reading and their spelling skills.
- The majority of parents who responded to Parent View and who spoke to inspectors agreed that teaching is good.
- Teachers have high expectations of the presentation of pupils' work. As a result, pupils' handwriting in workbooks and the writing on display around the school are of a high standard.
- Work in pupils' books shows that the pace of learning is often brisk. Where teaching is highly effective, pupils are offered feedback and opportunities to practise what has been learned, in line with the school's marking and feedback policy. However, on occasions, these skills are not applied quickly enough and progress is not as strong.
- Teachers do not consistently challenge the most able pupils and, consequently, not all most able pupils excel.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- A very positive climate for learning exists across the school. Classrooms are calm, orderly and purposeful. Attitudes to learning are superb. Pupils talk confidently about their learning, work well together and enjoy sharing their ideas with adults and other pupils.
- Pupils feel very safe and well looked after. They know who to go to and are confident that the adults in the school will deal with their concerns. Speaking for many, a pupil said, 'There are lots of people to help us.'
- There is calm at break and lunchtimes, both in and out of the school. Pupils choose healthy options, try new foods and understand about staying healthy.
- Pupils said that bullying is rare. If there are incidents, these are dealt with quickly.
- Parents who responded to Parent View said that their child is well looked after and kept safe.
- Pupils develop a very clear understanding of how they can keep healthy through making healthy food choices and developing an active lifestyle. A significant increase in the number of pupils taking part in after-school clubs demonstrates the impact of this learning.
- Pupils are taught how to stay safe when using the internet. They explain clearly how websites can be blocked and show they understand the potential pitfalls when using social media.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils are extremely well mannered and polite. Their behaviour in lessons, at playtimes and as they move around the school is often exemplary. Their friendliness to each other and good-natured play are very evident and reflect the positive, caring ethos which has been created by leaders. Pupils get on very well together and they are unfailingly polite.
- Pupils respond quickly to instructions and requests from staff, and their outstanding conduct reflects the school's efforts to promote high standards.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy school life and are very keen to earn rewards and reap the benefits of being a pupil at St Joseph's. They told inspectors that they enjoy such events as 'compliment day' and 'tell a joke day'.
- Staff record incidents of poor behaviour well. The school's behaviour logs demonstrate mostly low-level incidents which are quickly and effectively dealt with. Incidents of bullying and racist comments are extremely rare and, when they do occur, are quickly and efficiently managed.
- Levels of attendance are above the national average and, due to the concerted efforts of pupils, parents and staff, few pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, miss school on a regular basis.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' attainment is generally improving across the school. The unvalidated 2017 performance information shows that, in reading, writing and mathematics at both key stages 1 and 2, outcomes at the expected and higher standards for pupils' ages were in line with national averages and, in some cases, higher. They were better than the school's performance in 2016. As a result, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of education.
- Effective, targeted use of the pupil premium funding is enabling disadvantaged pupils to make good progress. As a result, any difference in progress between disadvantaged and other pupils nationally is diminishing.
- Progress information for pupils currently in the school suggests that most pupils are making good or better progress from their individual starting points in a range of subjects. This was confirmed by the work seen by inspectors in pupils' exercise books.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are very well supported by staff, who have received training in order to support their needs. This group of pupils are making strong progress from their starting points. Leaders and staff work closely with a range of outside agencies to support these pupils and their families. Careful monitoring of their progress allows teachers to meet their needs effectively through well-considered activities across a range of subjects. Pupils are supported to enable them to have access to all areas of the school curriculum.

- By the time pupils leave school at the end of Year 6, they are academically and socially well prepared for secondary school. This is good because transition arrangements between the school and the secondary school are strong.
- Pupils acquire phonics knowledge well and make good progress in their reading skills from their initial starting points. As a consequence, the school has seen a significant increase in the proportion of pupils who reach the required standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1.
- Pupils make good progress in a range of subjects across the curriculum. However, the lack of precise and timely feedback from teachers in these subjects sometimes prevents pupils from making even more progress.
- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are not being challenged sufficiently across the school in their learning. More needs to be done to ensure that challenge for these pupils is evident in all year groups and across all subjects.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Leaders know the strengths and weaknesses in the early years extremely well. As a result, they are able to identify quickly staff training needs and areas for improvement. All staff contribute to assessment systems, as do midday assistants and parents. Consequently, where there are any gaps in learning, leaders are able to plan inspiring activities that will support children's further progress.
- The early years leader has a clear understanding of her role. She has been well supported by school leaders to make improvements. Leaders have been active in establishing closer links with the growing number of pre-schools in order to streamline assessment procedures. Transition into the school is a real strength.
- As a result of highly effective teaching, children make strong progress from skills, knowledge and understanding that are typical for their age when they join the school.
- Children's attainment by the end of the Reception Year has been rising rapidly over recent years. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development was above the national average in 2016 and has risen again in 2017. An increasing proportion of children do better than this too. Children are consequently very well prepared for life in Year 1.
- Children's language and communication skills are well taught. Children who speak English as an additional language make rapid progress because staff model good pronunciation and speaking skills at all times during the day. The teaching of phonics in the early years is strong and, as a result, children rapidly develop their skills. Teachers ensure that children are enthused by phonics. For example, they planned a topic on pirates to develop children's 'p' sound.
- Teaching nurtures, engages and motivates children, promoting a sense of achievement and developing confidence. For example, children talked openly and with great enthusiasm about their experiences at school.
- Children learn extremely well and play happily together in the large, busy and lively learning environments. Children settle happily and are clearly familiar with well-

established classroom routines. They become increasingly independent as adults help them develop socially and emotionally.

- Children listen carefully to adults and each other. They take turns and share toys readily. They chat happily to each other and the adults as they explore and experience the activities provided.
- Teachers plan a range of engaging activities which are adapted promptly to respond to the interests of children. Good use is made of the indoor and outdoor space to develop all aspects of learning.
- The welfare needs of the children are well met. Leaders work effectively with parents and external organisations to ensure that children's needs are considered and that children are safe and very well cared for. Arrangements for safeguarding are effective and children learn in a safe environment. Children are supported appropriately in taking care of themselves.

School details

Unique reference number	109635
Local authority	Luton
Inspection number	10036254

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	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	828
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lena Cole
Headteacher	Jacqueline Lee
Telephone number	01582 57 2964
Website	www.stjosephsprimaryluton.co.uk
Email address	head@stjosephs.primaryluton.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	5–6 June 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is much larger than the average-sized primary school and expanded in January 2015 to incorporate the local infant school that subsequently closed.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average.
- Just over half of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, which is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards for primary schools, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 38 lessons and parts of lessons, of which a proportion were jointly observed with a senior leader.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils. Other meetings were held with governors, a representative of the local authority, senior leaders and staff, including those with responsibilities for leading subjects and year groups.
- Inspectors analysed 60 responses to the online parent questionnaire, Parent View, during the inspection. They also analysed the school's own questionnaire for parents.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at a number of documents, including those relating to the monitoring of teaching, targets set and records of pupils' progress. They also looked at records relating to attendance, behaviour, bullying and safeguarding, the school development plan, data on pupils' progress and samples of pupils' work.

Inspection team

Joseph Figg, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
James Dyke	Ofsted Inspector
Brenda Watson	Ofsted Inspector
Lynn Lowery	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Wilson	Ofsted Inspector

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