

Our Lady and St Joseph Catholic Primary School

Wades Place, Poplar E14 0DE

Inspection dates

4–5 July 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The new headteacher, other senior leaders and governors provide inspirational leadership. There is a strong sense of teamwork and a shared vision across the school. Leaders are determined to make sure that pupils leave the school very well prepared for their future lives, both academically and socially.
- Teaching is consistently good and improving. Teachers prepare activities that engage pupils well and help them to become successful learners.
- The school has an effective tracking system that accurately measures the progress that pupils are making. Leaders use the information to trigger extra support for pupils who fall behind.
- The curriculum provides pupils with an extensive range of stimulating experiences that they clearly enjoy. It strongly supports their academic learning as well as their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and understanding of life in modern Britain.
- Early years provision is outstanding because children are taught extremely well in a very nurturing environment. Consequently, children learn a great deal and rapidly develop mature social skills.
- All groups of pupils make good overall progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. Some make outstanding progress. There are, however, some inconsistencies across the subjects and year groups.
- Disadvantaged pupils make stronger progress than other pupils nationally. However, occasionally there are progress gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers in school and between boys and girls.
- There is scope for teachers to set consistently more challenging work in English and mathematics, especially for the most able pupils.
- New subject leaders have made a good start in driving improvements in their areas of responsibility to ensure that pupils make good progress overall. However, they have not yet sharply developed their skills to make sure that all groups of pupils make consistently outstanding progress across the subjects.
- Pupils are eager to learn and behave well in class and around the school. Leaders are successfully improving rates of attendance. They are, however, still below the national average.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it enables all groups of pupils to make strong progress by:
 - teachers giving pupils, especially the most able, more challenging work as soon as they have mastered the basics of a topic
 - increasing the opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills to solving more-complex problems
 - consistently having the same high expectations for the quality and quantity of writing across the subjects as teachers have in English lessons.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - continuing to develop subject leaders' skills in checking the progress of all pupils so that all pupil groups achieve equally well.
 - increasing attendance through working with parents to help them understand how their child's absence is detrimental to their child's learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The new headteacher and other leaders have inspired confidence and aspiration in pupils, members of staff and parents alike. Morale is high. As one member of staff put it, 'The school continually strives to improve itself and the lives of its pupils and families. It is truly a pleasure to work here.' Equally, a parent told inspectors, 'I wholeheartedly recommend this school to anyone who believes the development of their child is paramount.'
- Leaders place great emphasis on helping teachers to improve and new leaders to develop their skills. They provide a range of training opportunities, mentoring and coaching as well as access to external consultants. Leaders regularly observe lessons and give teachers developmental feedback. Appraisal and review systems are robust in holding teachers to account for their performance. As a result, teaching is consistently good and increasingly outstanding.
- Leaders at all levels have effective systems for checking and evaluating the effectiveness of their areas of responsibility. They use the information well to plan for improvements. There is no sense of complacency, as all leaders want the very best possible outcomes for pupils. The new subject leaders have made a good start in improving their areas of responsibility. They have not yet fully developed their skills to make sure that teaching is consistently strong enough to enable all groups of pupils to make sufficient progress to reach the highest standards of which they are capable.
- Leaders have introduced effective systems for checking on pupils' progress. Teachers work with colleagues in five other schools across the deanery in order to moderate their assessments of pupils work. Senior leaders, including the inclusion leaders, meet with teachers regularly to discuss every pupil's progress. They arrange support to help those falling behind. At these meetings, they also review how well previous support programmes have helped pupils catch up. They make adjustments as necessary. As a result, all pupils make at least good progress.
- Leaders plan the curriculum carefully so that pupils gain essential knowledge and skills across a range of subjects and themes. Leaders make sure that pupils experience a range of enrichment activities. The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development very well. Pupils gain a wealth of experience from visits, such as to the Houses of Parliament and the opening of the daily session at the London Stock Exchange. There are many visits linked directly to pupils' learning, such as to museums, art galleries, music workshops at the Barbican and the opera. Year 6 pupils visit Paris to enhance their spoken French and experience a European culture. These valuable and memorable experiences broaden pupils' social outlook and prepare them well for their future adult lives.
- Leaders make sure that pupils learn about other religious faiths apart from Catholicism. For example, the school had an Eid celebration day and there is an annual multi-faith week. Speakers from the Jewish and Muslim community visit the school and pupils visit their places of worship.

- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. This is because inclusion leaders spend additional funding effectively in providing learning resources and adult support to help eligible pupils learn well.
- Leaders use the pupil premium funding to good effect to provide extra academic support and opportunities to enhance their personal development. Last year, eligible pupils made more overall progress across key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics than other pupils nationally.
- The school uses its sports premium funding well. Leaders employ a specialist coach to deliver both formal physical education lessons and an increasing range of sporting clubs during and after school. This year, pupils have been participating in sporting competitions. This means that pupils are gaining new skills and increasing their physical health.
- Leaders work closely with the local authority attendance officer and parents in following up absence. Leaders also celebrate and reward pupils whose attendance is high. The work with families is beginning to make a positive difference for individuals. However, persistent absence for some groups, such as those entitled to free school meals, remains too high.

Governance of the school

- Governors bring a wealth of experience and expertise, including from the world of education, to bear on their work.
- Governors have robust systems for checking on the work of the school. Governors visit the school regularly, to meet with members of staff and pupils, to see lessons and pupils' behaviour directly.
- Governors hold senior and subject leaders to account for their work in a variety of ways. This includes, for instance, a governor regularly attending the pupils' progress meetings at school. These processes help governors to have a sound understanding of the quality of teaching and how well pupils are progressing.
- Governors are fully committed to the professional development of members of staff. They are currently supporting a number of senior and middle leaders in participating in nationally accredited leadership courses. In agreement with the governors, participants link the leadership projects that they have to do as part of their courses to the school's improvement priorities. Leaders are therefore developing their skills to drive forward improvements across the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All training and systems are up to date. The site is safe and there is a strong culture and understanding that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Members of staff are well aware of the potential safeguarding issues in the wider community and are alert to any signs that may suggest that a pupil is vulnerable.

- During weekly phase meetings, leaders present members of staff with a safeguarding-related scenario for discussion. This helps all to keep safeguarding at the forefront of their minds.
- Leaders work with agencies to support vulnerable pupils and their families. They help parents understand safeguarding issues such as through a workshop on e-safety and many useful links on the school's website.
- Leaders make sure that pupils understand how to keep themselves safe. As there is much building work in the local area, leaders invited builders to talk to pupils about the dangers of a building site, for instance. Following the recent terrorist attacks in London, leaders shared the official police advice with pupils of 'run, hide and tell.'

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is consistently good and improving overall. As a result, all groups of pupils make good progress, and in some cases, outstanding progress.
- Teachers set activities that mostly engage and inspire pupils to learn well. They help pupils to see links between subjects and put their learning into context. For instance, during science week, pupils study poetry about electricity in English lessons and study electricity and its use in science lessons.
- Teachers give pupils clear explanations and help them to approach their work in an orderly way. For example, in literacy, teachers give pupils planning frameworks so that they organise their thoughts in a systematic way before writing a newspaper article. Pupils say that this helps them to learn well.
- Teachers ask probing questions and create an environment where they encourage pupils to think and consider different points of view. In a Year 3 class, inspectors observed pupils debating whether it is right or wrong to keep animals in a zoo. While many argued that it is right, one pupil suggested that we should use animals again for human transportation and so reduce pollution. This activity made a positive contribution to pupils' moral development.
- The teaching of reading is effective. Teachers and other adults teach phonics well and so from an early age children learn to read. Home reading is actively encouraged. As pupils progress through the school they benefit from well-structured lessons that help them develop good comprehension skills. Leaders have correctly identified that they need to give the most able pupils texts that are more challenging to broaden their vocabulary and deepen their understanding further.
- The teaching of writing is good and improving. Pupils have many opportunities to write for a range of purposes and audiences, not only in English but also in topic work. Because of the exciting activities that teachers arrange, such as visits to a Viking village, pupils feel motivated and want to write. Pupils regularly check, edit and improve their work. Evidence in books shows that when teachers demand the same high standards of writing across the subjects, as they do in literacy lessons, progress is very strong. Some teachers, however, do not have those high expectations and so pupils make good progress overall and not outstanding progress.
- Leaders introduced a new scheme for teaching mathematics this year. The majority of teachers have responded very well to the training and are delivering effective lessons

that help pupils make strong progress. Evidence in books, however, shows that the work is not consistently challenging enough. Occasionally, teachers do not give the most able pupils sufficiently challenging problems to solve. This limits them from making outstanding progress.

- Effective support and deployment of suitable resources in and out of class helps pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to make consistently good progress from their starting points.
- Occasionally, pupils complete exercises that are too easy for them before the teachers set them work that is more difficult. This limits them from reaching the higher standards.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- As they progress through the school, pupils develop their self-confidence. With the wealth of enrichment opportunities that they have, pupils begin to realise that with hard work, they can achieve very well in the future.
- Leaders prominently promote Catholic values across the school. Pupils nevertheless learn much about other faiths and cultures. The school is a diverse community, including pupils of other faiths or none, and of various ethnic backgrounds. The school is a harmonious community. Pupils say that there is no racism in the school because everyone is valued. This was demonstrated, for example, when teachers asked a Muslim pupil to lead a tour for classmates in a mosque.
- Pupils make a positive contribution to their wider community. For example, pupils, together with adults, raise funds for a local homeless centre and volunteer their time in visiting and helping with the cooking. The school council decides on a range of other charities for pupils to support, such as for research into treating diabetes and cancer.
- Leaders encourage pupils to take part in the range of sporting activities available. At break and lunchtimes, members of staff organise informal games in the playground to foster physical activity. The school does much in helping pupils to understand how to live a healthy lifestyle. Leaders are in the process of applying for the gold standard healthy schools award.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum promotes pupils' mental and emotional well-being. Pupils learn to understand their own and others' emotions and the programmes of study include topics such as resilience, friendship and goal-setting.
- The new family and pupil liaison officer works closely with pupils and parents whose circumstances make them vulnerable and, in liaison with external agencies, helps them remove barriers that get in the way of successful learning.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.

- Pupils enjoy coming to school. They wear their uniform with pride and take good care of the school's environment. They behave well as they walk around the school and are welcoming to visitors.
- Pupils have a good attitude to learning, as they want to succeed. They work well independently and collaboratively in groups. Occasionally there is some low-level disruption. Teachers apply the behaviour policy where pupils have to reflect on the school value they are failing to exhibit. This usually gets them back on task.
- Leaders put in a great deal of effort to work with families and agencies in cases where pupils' absence is too high. They have had some success. There are still too many parents, however, who do not make sure that their children attend school regularly. This has a detrimental effect on those pupils' learning and progress.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Compared to national figures, outcomes across the school in 2016 improved markedly on 2015 performance. Pupils reached generally average or above-average standards. Progress at the end of key stage 2 was above average in reading and mathematics and in the top 10% nationally in writing.
- The school's provisional performance information for current pupils indicates a slight dip in the proportion passing the Year 1 phonics screening, though it remains above the 2016 national average. In reading and writing at the end of Year 2, there is set to be an increase in those reaching the expected standard and a decrease in mathematics. The proportions of pupils reaching the expected standards in all subjects, however, are above the national averages for 2016. This represents at least good progress from Reception.
- The school's provisional assessment information suggests that in the most recent assessments this year, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics has decreased. This outcome is still slightly higher than the provisional national figure and represents good overall progress from pupils' starting points.
- The work in pupils' books confirms the school's assessments that across the subjects and year groups, pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are making at least good progress across all subjects because of good teaching and targeted support. Where the teaching and support is particularly strong, pupils make outstanding progress from their starting points.
- Leaders' analysis across year groups and subjects shows that although all groups make good progress, sometimes there is a notable difference between the progress of girls and boys. Leaders have plans in place to reduce these gaps.
- The school's use of pupil premium funding makes a strong contribution to disadvantaged pupils' progress and attainment. In 2016, Year 6 disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, made better progress, enabling them to reach similar or above standards compared with other pupils nationally. Their attainment, however, was not as good as their peers. The situation for current disadvantaged pupils across the school is similar; they are making good or better

progress but are not consistently performing as well as their peers. Leaders provide disadvantaged pupils with much help to catch up with their peers, but a high proportion of these pupils are persistently absent, thus slowing their progress.

- The most able pupils make at least good progress. The 2016 published data shows that the proportions reaching greater depth across the key stages and subjects, from high starting points, were above average, except in Year 6 mathematics. This was also the case for the most able disadvantaged pupils. Work seen in current pupils' books shows that across the year groups and subjects, there remain instances where teaching does not challenge the most able pupils to help them reach the standards of which they are capable. In those cases, they are not reaching their potential.
- Pupils leave the school well prepared, academically and socially, for entry into secondary school.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Overall, children enter the early years with skills that are below those expected for their age, especially in language and communication. They make outstanding progress so that the proportion leaving Reception with a good level of development is above the national average. Children are very well prepared for Year 1.
- Leadership of the early years is highly effective. Leaders have a clear understanding of how children learn. They train all members of staff to make sure that all contribute effectively to children's successful learning and social development. There is a strong sense of teamwork.
- Leaders have robust systems of evaluating the early years and use their findings to drive improvements in a timely fashion. In 2016, for instance, disadvantaged children did not make as much progress as other children nationally. Leaders focused on giving disadvantaged children additional support this year. As a result, provisional performance information for 2017 data indicates that disadvantaged children are making much better progress.
- Children's learning journeys show that all members of staff often assess the progress of every child. Parents too are actively encouraged to contribute to the record of their child's learning journey. They send in notes, emails and photographs of their children learning. Parents also come into the setting in the mornings to read with their children. Leaders use their knowledge of each child's needs and interests to plan activities that help them make good progress. This means that all children, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, learn well and progress quickly from their starting points.
- Learning resources provide an extraordinarily stimulating and vibrant learning environment. Indoor provision mirrors the very wide range of resources offered outdoors. Teachers use a wide range of learning resources, both indoors and outdoors. For example, following a recent trip down to the seaside, teachers set up a beach shop outside. Pupils made ice creams of various colours from paper while indoors. These and other beach-related items, such as sunscreen and sun hats, were put on sale. The two shopkeepers sold the various items that children purchased with real money. The shopkeepers had to give their customers the correct change. In this activity, children

developed their creative skills. They used their imaginations, practised speaking and listening, collaborated with their friends and applied their mathematical skills.

- There is a very strong emphasis on developing children's literacy skills. Adults constantly engage children in discussion and question them to think deeply and learn new vocabulary. Generally, there are plentiful resources to encourage writing, reading, mathematical problem-solving, art work, exploration and safe behaviour. During visits to lessons, inspectors noticed that every child in the early years was fully absorbed in a constructive activity.
- Children learn much about Catholic values, but also celebrate Eid and Diwali, for example. They have been following the gingerbread man in his travels across the globe. In doing so, they have learned about different countries and cultures.
- Children relish their time in early years. They behave extremely well, take turns, share resources and listen attentively. Children show resilience and sustain concentration.
- Leaders and members of staff in other schools visit this setting to learn from best practice.

School details

Unique reference number	139423
Local authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	10031654

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	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	425
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Teresa Parker
Headteacher	Patrick Devereux
Telephone number	0203 764 8860
Website	http://www.olsj.towerhamlets.sch.uk/
Email address	admin@ourladys.towerhamlets.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Our Lady and St Joseph Catholic Primary School is a well above average-sized primary school.
- The school opened in September 2014, following the amalgamation of two single form entry schools, Holy Family Catholic Primary School, Poplar and Our Lady Catholic Primary School, Limehouse.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is well above that found nationally.
- The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language is well above average.

- An above-average proportion of pupils have special educational needs support. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is well above that found nationally.
- The new headteacher took up his post in September 2016. There are two acting deputy headteachers, one of whom will be substantive from September 2017.
- The school had a section 48 denominational inspection during the week prior to this inspection.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 24 parts of lessons. Some of these observations were made jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors looked at the work in pupils' books and listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors met with two groups of pupils and spoke informally to other pupils in lessons and during breaks and lunchtimes. Inspectors also met with school leaders.
- Meetings were held with three members of the governing body, including the chair, and with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors examined a range of documentation such as that relating to pupils' attainment and progress, information about how teachers' performance is managed and minutes of governing body meetings. They also looked at records and documentation about pupils' behaviour, attendance and exclusions and the ways in which the school keeps pupils safe.
- Inspectors considered the 19 responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire for parents. They also had informal conversations with parents in the playground. Inspectors also took account of the views of 51 members of staff and 51 pupils who responded to the inspection questionnaires.

Inspection team

David Radomsky, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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Sheila Cohring	Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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