

Inspection of a good school: St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Thame

Brook Lane, Thame, Oxfordshire OX9 2AB

Inspection dates:

19–20 November 2019

Outcome

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Thame continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy their learning. They are excited by the wide range of experiences regularly on offer, from chess to learning out-of-doors, for instance. Well-developed opportunities help pupils learn about the wider world. They told me, for example, how their links with Malawi, help them to 'get what it is like' for pupils there. This kind of rich experience helps pupils in their reading and learning about other places.

Pupils know that staff expect them to behave well and work hard. There is a clear focus on learning. Warm relationships across the school support pupils well as they strive to meet leaders' high expectations. A sense of everyone working together and supporting each other pervades. Pupils understand how rules, such as only running in one direction around the new track, help keep them safe. Outside at playtimes they are active and happy. They are keen to help, for example by packing away equipment or collecting snack packaging for recycling. They say that bullying happens very rarely and is quickly resolved.

Pupils attain well. They become articulate, confident and engaged learners.

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

Leaders are ambitious for pupils. Under the clear guidance of the principal and her deputy, staff have developed the subjects they lead, across the school, to build pupils' knowledge, confidence and understanding over time. Standards are high and improving. Pupils achieve well. In class, pupils behave well and work extremely well together.

In many subjects, for example in mathematics, teachers use subject plans, and their knowledge of what pupils can do to provide pupils with just the right amount of challenge. This helps pupils to grow in confidence and apply their knowledge to increasingly complex problems and calculations. Pupils enjoy mathematics. Their secure grasp of times tables helps them to solve problems accurately and swiftly.

In some other subjects, such as science, plans are not yet fully developed. Pupils build well on their scientific knowledge, such as by using previous learning about building electric circuits to help them when learning about switches and symbols. However, overall, pupils' science learning does not reliably deepen their ability to work scientifically as they move up through the school.

Right from the start in early years, across a range of subjects, teachers use their strong subject knowledge to help pupils to understand and use correct terms and vocabulary. Pupils become articulate and precise when asking questions or describing their thinking. Learning across the school is supported well by pupils' good behaviour. Aspirations are high. Pupils want to learn and do well.

Sometimes, teachers do not plan learning which is closely enough matched to the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This means that learning is not consistently well tailored to meet individual needs or broken down into the steps that pupils need, in order to experience and build on success. This limits these pupils' progress.

Leaders have placed central importance on pupils learning to read well. Pupils read and are read to every day. They are given a broad reading experience which helps them to discuss their reading preferences and make the most of sharing books together. Leaders identify any pupils who need additional support in mastering early reading skills. Teachers ensure that these pupils have the focused support that they need to help them to catch up.

Pupils get off to a good start learning to read in the early years. Most quickly master phonics because phonics is taught regularly and consistently. Adults make sure that the books children take home are carefully selected to help them to practise the phonics that they are learning. As pupils move up through the school, they develop strong reading skills which they apply to understanding a wide range of texts.

Leaders ensure that there is a wide range of opportunities for pupils both within the curriculum and linked to the wider life of the school, for example pupils' enthusiasm for the 'daily run' following the development of the track, and their successful participation in cross-country running events. Pupils also benefit from close links with the diocese and from taking part in local community events such as the recent remembrance parade.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The headteacher has prioritised safeguarding. Developments such as new fencing and systems for entry have helped to secure the school site.

Systems for recording child protection concerns have been reviewed and revised. Staff explained how this helps them in their monitoring and responding to any needs that arise.

Staff are well trained in keeping pupils safe. They know the signs to look out for that might indicate concerns. Parents are confident that their children are safe at school. Pupils say that they feel safe. They express confidence in staff to help keep them safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders should ensure that sequences of learning are equally well developed across all subjects. The curriculum in all subjects should ensure that pupils build on what they know and remember, to further extend their learning and deepen their understanding.
- Leaders should ensure that teachers always take account of pupils' SEND needs when planning for this group of pupils. Learning plans should be closely matched to pupils' individual needs and focused on helping them to make the progress they need and experience success.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Thame to be good on 21–22 March 2012.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	139529
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10111271
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	193
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Concannon
Principal	Jess Tweedie
Website	www.st-josephs.oxon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10 February 2016

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Dominic Barberi Multi Academy Company (DBMAC), a multi-academy trust which leads seven schools.

Information about this inspection

- I met with the principal, leaders, staff, and representatives from the governing body. I met with a representative from the academy trust and spoke to a representative of the diocese on the telephone. I spoke to parents at the school gate and considered their responses to Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses.
- I did deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and science. I visited a range of lessons and looked at learning plans. I spoke to pupils and staff about pupils' learning and looked at pupils' work.
- I spoke to pupils, parents and staff about the school's work to keep pupils safe. A range of safeguarding documentation was considered.

Inspection team

Deborah Gordon, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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