

Holy Souls Catholic Primary School

Mallard Close, Acocks Green, Birmingham, B27 6BN

Inspection dates 15–16 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- From starting points that are below the levels expected for their age, pupils make good progress in all age groups. By the time they reach the end of Year 6, standards in English and mathematics are above average.
- The quality of teaching is good overall. It is typically good, and occasionally outstanding.
- Pupils of all abilities and from all backgrounds, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, get the help and guidance they need to make good progress.
- The school's values strongly promote the pupils' moral, social and spiritual development.
- Pupils' outstanding behaviour helps to make the school a very happy place where good relationships support effective learning and very good social skills. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and healthy.
- The school carefully tracks the progress of all pupils in English and mathematics. This information is used well to identify any pupils at risk of underachieving, so extra support can be provided quickly.
- Effective monitoring of all aspects of pupils' education by the senior leadership team and governors supports effective teaching and learning, and gives the school a good capacity to improve further.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding.
- Achievement in mathematics is not as good as in English.
- In some lessons, especially in mathematics, teachers do not always provide work that challenges the more-able pupils.
- Teachers do not always check on pupils' learning regularly enough during lessons.
- Teachers' marking does not show pupils clearly how to improve their work, and they do not have enough opportunities to be involved in checking their work.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited 23 lessons, and were accompanied by the acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher during six of these observations.
- The inspectors observed lunch breaks and behaviour around the whole school.
- Meetings were held with pupils, and inspectors talked to many other pupils during lessons and break times. The inspectors met with governors and the lead inspector had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.
- There were not enough responses to the online parental questionnaire, Parent View, to publish the results. However, the inspectors took account of a recent school questionnaire with over 200 responses, and spoke informally with a number of parents.
- The inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a number of documents, including the school’s own data on pupils’ progress, school improvement plans, leaders’ checks on the quality of teaching, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Ronald Hall, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jennifer Taylor

Additional Inspector

Dennis Brittain

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much larger than the average primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who qualify for the pupil premium is above average. This additional government money is provided to help certain groups. In this school it currently applies only to pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average, as is the proportion supported through school action plus or a statement of special educational needs.
- The majority of pupils are of White British origin, but the proportion who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher took up these posts two weeks before the inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make more teaching outstanding by making sure that:
 - staff have more opportunities to share the best practice in the school and gain further experiences of high-quality teaching in other settings
 - teachers frequently check how well pupils are learning during lessons, so they can adapt work to make sure all pupils make rapid progress
 - teachers' marking gives pupils with the knowledge they need to improve their work, and they are given the opportunity to be involved in assessing their own work.
- Raise achievement in mathematics by giving all teachers focused training so they have the confidence and skills to challenge all pupils, but especially the more-able pupils.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter the school with lower than expected levels of skill and ability, and make a good start in Reception. The teachers' focus on developing children's confidence in learning, both personally and academically, makes sure that they make rapid gains in their social and emotional development. The positive start made in Reception is built on effectively as pupils develop and learn with confidence throughout their journey through the school.
- The published data on pupils' attainment show that other than in 2012, when that particular year group had started with a lower level of attainment than that normally found in the school, standards have been consistently above average at the end of Year 6. School data clearly show that even though pupils' achievement in mathematics is slightly lower than in English, standards are on track to be above average in both subjects at the end of the current school year.
- Pupils in minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language all make good progress. The school goes to great lengths to make sure these pupils can access learning as well as any other pupil. This was typified during an observation of a national test for Year 6 pupils, where a pupil who spoke little English on recently joining the school was provided with a translator to make sure they could access the mathematics papers.
- Although achievement in mathematics is good, it is not improving as quickly as that in English, as staff lack confidence and some expertise in this subject. This leads to pupils not always being stretched enough, especially the more-able pupils.
- Good teaching of reading leads to pupils becoming capable and fluent readers. Teachers increasingly emphasise the learning of the sounds and names of letters, and pupils' skills are further developed where needed by extra support out of lessons. The results are clearly shown by the successes of the pupils in the national Year 1 phonics screening check.
- Across the school, teachers work on developing pupils' confidence to help raise standards. This was shown well in a lesson about the meanings of text, where a group of less-able pupils and those supported by pupil premium funding were asked to highlight features of a story's characters. Excellent teaching and relationships led to pupils debating each other's evidence to support their views. This became animated and highly challenging, and resulted in the pupils making excellent progress.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs do equally as well as other groups. They play a full part in lessons due to the 'quiet, no fuss' support from teachers and teaching assistants within their classrooms, reflecting the school's commitment to equality of opportunity that allows all pupils to progress well.
- Pupils who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium make good progress across the whole school. Extra staff to support these pupils in literacy and numeracy lessons has led to improvements in their achievement, resulting in them narrowing the gap with other pupils. The 2012 Year 6 test results showed that the attainment of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals on average was roughly two terms behind their classmates but above that of similar pupils nationally, in both English and mathematics.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good and occasionally outstanding. Common features include the clear routines in lessons, the positive relationships between teachers and pupils, and skilful use of questioning to assess pupils' learning. Teachers generally display good subject knowledge and explain clearly to the pupils what they are going to learn and why.
- In the best teaching seen, for example in a Year 6 mathematics lesson on fractions, there was a wide range of activities for pupils, carefully matched to different ability levels. The teacher skilfully checked on learning throughout the lesson, adapting tasks and carefully questioning pupils to make sure they made fast progress.
- In the best lessons teachers challenge and stretch pupils' understanding and skills. For example, in a Year 3 lesson on rewriting a famous children's story, pupils were encouraged and challenged to use a wide range of describing words, build complex sentences and use high-level punctuation. The pupils responded with eagerness, were totally engrossed in their work and took great pride in trying to outdo each other, and so made outstanding progress.
- However, not enough teaching is at this high level. Teachers have not had enough opportunities to observe and learn from the very best practice within the school or elsewhere. This is especially the case in mathematics, where teachers lack confidence and have not had training in order to provide them with the skills to fully challenge all pupils, but especially the more-able pupils.
- Where teaching is not so effective teachers do not fully check on the progress the pupils are making during the lesson, so they do not ensure pupils make the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers' marking does not consistently give pupils enough information to improve their work, and they do not have enough opportunities to be more involved in their learning by assessing their own work.
- Teachers and teaching assistants provide good and at times excellent help and guidance for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and those known to be eligible for pupil premium funding. This was highlighted well in a Reception class where the teacher provided a good explanation of the task related to letter sounds and the teaching assistant moved to the outdoor area with the children. The outdoor area was very effectively used by the adults to explore words and letter words from a range of objects, leading to excellent progress being made by all the children.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils behave outstandingly well throughout the school. They are considerate, with older pupils readily helping younger pupils at all times when they are together. Pupils are welcoming, courteous and very polite to visitors.
- Pupils are rightly proud of their school, valuing and promoting excellent relationships in all parts of this supportive community. The inspectors were constantly in conversation with pupils of all ages who wished to share their work, their views of the school and what they thought of their teachers.
- Behaviour in lessons is consistently at least good and often outstanding. Adults provide

exemplary role models. They show respect, and in turn earn respect from the pupils. Pupils' very positive attitudes are encouraged through the school's clearly understood values, and this permeates the development of the pupils' personal moral and spiritual understanding. It is also the driving force in the pupils' understanding of other religions and cultures.

- Across the whole school, the pupils' full participation and willingness to cooperate with each other to improve their work greatly enhance their learning. In numerous lessons pupils were observed supporting each other, and following a national test Year 6 pupils encouraged and reassured each other when doubts about their work arose.
- Pupils, parents, staff and governors all agree that pupils' behaviour and the absence of bullying are marked strengths of the school. In particular, parents praise the support given by the school to families and the close individual support given to pupils.
- The very strong and supportive links with parents and the pupils' enjoyment of school have led to attendance improving, and this is now average.
- Pupils said that they feel very safe at school. They clearly showed a good understanding of how to keep safe, and about the different forms of bullying as well as risks out of school. They have a good understanding of e-safety and how to stay safe when using computers.

The leadership and management are good

- The acting headteacher and deputy headteacher have shown that the senior and middle leaders and managers can lead the school well, even in the most difficult situations, having only recently been appointed due to the sudden absence of the headteacher due to illness. They have high ambitions and the full support of all the staff in continuing to improve the school. The staff questionnaires show very strong support for their work, as do the school's questionnaires from parents.
- Teachers responsible for the key subjects of English and mathematics promote good standards. They monitor classrooms, planning and teaching effectively and, where necessary, provide support for staff. They hold teachers to account.
- The school has recently restructured the leadership of mathematics, is providing further support for teachers and has improved mathematical resources. However, these changes not yet had a positive effect on pupils' achievement in mathematics. Staff have not had enough opportunities to observe high-quality teaching in mathematics or enough training to have the skills and confidence to challenge all pupils, and especially the more-able pupils.
- Staff have clear and challenging performance targets that are appropriately based on the key priorities for the school as well as their individual needs. There is a good match between how well staff perform their roles and their pay rises and promotion.
- The school provides many opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is shown well in the flourishing music, arts and sports that are key aspects of school life. The way subjects are taught is constantly being reviewed to make sure they provide a stimulating, fun and meaningful learning experience for the pupils.
- The local authority rightly identifies this as a school needing only 'light-touch' support, but when needed, it is effective.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body carries out its responsibilities effectively, while also benefiting from good support from the local authority and diocese. The governors work closely with school leaders to monitor the quality of teaching and learning, and individual governors take responsibility for monitoring specific areas such as safeguarding, subjects or provision for pupils who have additional learning needs. They understand the links between the performance of teachers and their pay, and set challenging targets for the headteacher. They have a good understanding of the pupils' achievement and how this compares with the performance of other schools. They carry out their financial responsibilities effectively, including careful monitoring of the funding from the pupil premium, and make sure that safeguarding arrangements meet national requirements.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	103429
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	411731

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	417
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Cunningham
Headteacher	Kevin Kelly
Date of previous school inspection	28 June 2010
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