

Holy Spirit Catholic and Church of England Primary School

Gardenside, Leasowe, Wirral, CH46 2RP

Inspection dates 17–18 December 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		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils achieve well. Attainment has risen sharply since the appointment of the current headteacher and is now close to the national average at the end of Key Stage 2. The progress that pupils make has also accelerated at a fast pace.
- Almost all teaching is good with some that is outstanding. Teachers have strong, respectful relationships with the pupils in their classes. Teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving are increasing rapidly.
- The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support for pupils and their families.
- The school has forged excellent relationships with parents and the local community.
- Pupils enjoy school. They behave well towards each other and the adults who work with them.
- Pupils feel very safe in school.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.
- Attendance has risen and is now above average.
- Since her appointment the headteacher's outstanding and dynamic leadership has driven the school rapidly forward.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is yet outstanding. Teaching does not always set tasks that are at the right level of challenge, especially for the most-able pupils. The pace of some teaching is not fast enough.
- Teachers do not have enough opportunities to observe and share best teaching practice at first hand in other schools.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 13 lessons taught by nine teachers. Three of the observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors also observed the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) and listened to a group of Year 2 pupils read. They also observed an assembly and visited the community room where activities for parents and members of the wider community were taking place.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders and managers, four governors including the Chair of the Governing body, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of a wide range of documentation including: data relating to pupils' achievement; a summary of the school's self-evaluation; the school improvement plan; records of monitoring teaching and learning; records and policies relating to behaviour and safety; minutes of meetings of the governing body; and local authority reports on the school's effectiveness.
- There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's on-line questionnaire for parents, (Parent View), to give an overview. However, inspectors took account of results from a survey sent out by the school to parents to which there had been 75 recent responses. Inspectors also took account of 18 questionnaires returned by members of staff.

Inspection team

Stephen Wall, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Steve Rigby

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Holy Spirit is smaller than most primary schools nationally.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well-above average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children that are looked after.)
- Almost all pupils are White British.
- A few pupils who have joined the school from Poland speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well-above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards that set minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher took up her post in March 2012. A new deputy headteacher joined the school in January 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of teaching that is outstanding to raise achievement further by ensuring that:
 - all teaching sets tasks that are challenging enough for pupils according to their needs and abilities, especially the most-able pupils
 - the pace of teaching is always fast enough to keep pupils fully engaged
 - teachers are provided with more opportunities to observe and share high-quality teaching in other schools.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are generally well below those typical for their age.
- Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They make good progress because teaching is good and there is a wide range of stimulating activities that capture the children's interest and imagination.
- Although attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is below average, it has been on a steadily rising trend in recent years. In 2013 attainment in reading, writing and mathematics rose sharply reflecting the higher aspirations and expectations set by the headteacher and the improved quality of teaching.
- The improvement in attainment in Key Stage 2 mirrors that in Key Stage 1. In 2013 attainment rose sharply to be close to the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The proportion of pupils making the progress expected of them in English and mathematics from their individual starting points has been generally in line with national figures in recent years. In 2013 the proportion of pupils making better progress than this rose sharply and was well above the national figures in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Inspection evidence from observing lessons, analysing the work in pupils' books, school data and talking to pupils and staff indicate clearly that the rapid increase in achievement in 2013 is continuing to gather pace.
- The attainment and progress of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals was above that of similar pupils nationally in 2013. In comparison to their classmates, their attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics was equal. The gap closed significantly in comparison to 2012 because of the much sharper focus given to using the funding to meet these pupils' needs.
- Most pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs make the progress expected of them from their individual starting points. Like their classmates, their achievement has improved in recent years because of the sharper focus on meeting their needs and improving provision accordingly. The co-ordinator for special needs is highly effective in managing and tracking the progress and needs of these pupils.
- The fact that the achievement of nearly all groups of pupils is rising rapidly and securely testifies to the school's success in providing equality of opportunity.
- The relatively few pupils who speak English as an additional language also make good progress and achieve well.
- Attainment in literacy and numeracy is rising rapidly because the quality of teaching is improving and staff training has given a stronger focus to sharpen practice.
- The teaching of phonics has also improved and is now good. The success is seen in the rising levels of attainment in reading.
- The school uses its new sports funding effectively. It is used to buy in external support in sport and physical education to raise teachers' levels of skills and to provide greater variety for the provision of sports across the school.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has improved significantly in recent years, especially since the appointment of the current headteacher.
- Teachers have responded positively to the rallying call to make the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics more effective. Higher expectations, more rigorous monitoring and more focused use of checking on pupils' progress have transformed much teaching that required improvement into good teaching. This is resulting in rapidly rising achievement in all key stages.

- Teachers are more aware of the need to match the tasks that they set closely to pupils' differing needs and abilities. However, by setting tasks that are the same for all, in a few classes tasks are not challenging enough for the most-able pupils and too difficult for those who are slow learners.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. They use this astutely to ask searching questions that require pupils to give extended and reasoned answers. The result is that the most pupils speak and communicate clearly and confidently.
- While teaching is well paced in most lessons, occasionally it slows and pupils' interest wanes. This slows progress.
- Where teaching is outstanding it pushes pupils' progress along at a very fast pace. In a Year 2 English lesson, for example, where teaching was outstanding, the teacher pushed the lesson on at a brisk pace and managed to get the level of challenge right for different groups of pupils. The teacher checked pupils' progress and understanding regularly and used questioning skilfully to lead them step-by-step to realising what they needed to do to improve their work. Pupils responded with a real will to give of their best and made outstanding progress as a result.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is of consistently good quality. It makes sure that children make good progress overall in developing their basic skills in literacy and numeracy so that they have a firm foundation for more formal learning higher up the school.
- Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to the learning and progress of pupils, especially those pupils who have special educational needs.
- Teachers mark pupils' written work regularly. The majority of their comments are clear and helpful in showing pupils what they need to do to improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils say that they feel very safe in school. They are confident in approaching an adult with any problems and are equally confident in staff's ability to help and support them.
- Pupils behave well in lessons. They are eager to do their best and enjoy volunteering answers. They work well together in groups and pairs. Sometimes when the pace of teaching slows, however, pupils lose some interest and engage in some off-task chatter.
- Around school pupils are polite and welcoming. They treat each other and the adults working with them with respect.
- Pupils say that behaviour both in lessons and around school has improved a great deal in the last two years. They say that there is much less disruption in lessons and that incidents of poor and silly behaviour outside lessons have decreased significantly.
- Pupils also say that the incidence of bullying of any kind has decreased. Teachers deal with isolated incidents quickly and effectively.
- School records confirm the pattern of improving behaviour over time.
- The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support for its significant number of pupils and their families whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Two family liaison officers liaise very effectively with parents and a range of outside agencies to support these pupils. They organise a range of very popular activities for parents and the wider community including the provision of a popular community allotment on the school site that is pivotal in healthy cooking classes. Parents attending the weekly meeting in the community room sang the praises of the school for the level of support it provides.
- The quality of care, guidance and support, pupils' undoubted sense of right and wrong and the exceptionally strong Christian values that underpin all that the school does ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is of the highest order.
- Since her appointment the headteacher has targeted attendance and punctuality to school as a priority to raise achievement further and at a faster pace. A much clearer message has been sent to parents about the importance of regular attendance and procedures for checking on absence and lateness to school have been tightened. The result is attendance levels that have improved significantly and are now above average. The vast majority of pupils now arrive for

school on time.

- The results of the school's survey to parents show that the majority of parents have few concerns about the quality of pupils' behaviour.

Point The leadership and management are good

- Since her appointment the headteacher has provided the school with outstanding leadership. In a short space of time her tireless enthusiasm and drive have brought about significant and rapid improvement to achievement, the quality of teaching, behaviour and attendance. The capacity to carry on improving is strong, as is staff morale in the pursuit of making the school better.
- The roles of middle managers have been re-defined and they are growing in confidence. They welcome the extra responsibilities that they have been given to play a more constructive role in developing the school and making sure that the aspects for which they are responsible improve at a fast pace.
- The quality of teaching has improved because leadership has set higher expectations and has made monitoring of its quality more rigorous, including how the outcomes are used to focus on improving identified weaknesses.
- Leadership accepts the need to give teachers more opportunities to experience best practice in teaching in other schools to raise the quality of teaching further and faster.
- Leadership has also tightened procedures for managing staff performance to provide a sharper focus on holding teachers to account for increasing the proportion of pupils that make good progress in their classes. The links to advancement on the teachers' salary scale are well-established and clear to all.
- Leaders and managers know what the school does well and where it could do better. This informs the high-quality school development plan that sets out appropriate strategies for improvement and the procedures for evaluating their effectiveness.
- The curriculum is broad and meets the needs and interests of pupils. Topic work is planned well to provide opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their literacy and numeracy skills across a range of subjects. The wide range of extra-curricular activities, including well-managed and popular pre- and after-school provision, adds significantly to pupils' feeling of being valued as individuals and to their personal development.
- The school has forged exceptionally strong links with its parents and with the local community.
- After a period of providing intensive support for the school, the local authority now provides light-touch support in recognition of the rapid and secure improvements that leadership is bringing about.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures are fully in place.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The quality of governance is improving rapidly because the headteacher is making sure that governors receive the necessary training and information to hold the school more rigorously to account. For example, training in data on how well the school is performing in comparison to similar schools locally and against national data has given governors a sharp understanding of where the school could do better. Governors have a firm grasp on the school's finances and make sure that the principles of best value apply in deciding on their use. This applies also to the use of pupil premium funding and new sports funding. Since the appointment of the headteacher governors have been more regular visitors to school, including attending lessons. As a result, they have a firm knowledge of the quality of teaching and how much it has improved. Governors understand fully the procedures and application of performance management and provide effective support and challenge to the headteacher in its implementation.

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	136124
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	430527

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 - 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	186
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr John Feeney
Headteacher	Amanda Donelan
Date of previous school inspection	21 March 2012
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