

The Holy Family Catholic Primary School

Crookhams, Welwyn Garden City, AL7 1PG

Inspection dates 22–23 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Teaching is not planned well enough to ensure all pupils make the progress they are capable of.
- The achievement of pupils requires improvement. Pupils with special educational needs, those eligible for the pupil premium and the most able do not make enough progress.
- Children in the Reception class do not have enough well planned opportunities to explore and apply their learning.
- Pupils who have difficulty learning phonics (the sounds that letters make) are not taught well enough.
- Some middle leaders are not yet fulfilling their responsibilities effectively enough.

The school has the following strengths

- In a short time, the very effective headteacher has identified key priorities to improve the school. Aply supported by the deputy headteacher and with added drive from governors, she has held staff to account for their responsibilities, galvanised middle leaders and driven improvements in teaching. Where teaching is not good enough, staff are given clear guidance on how to improve it.
- Assessment is now accurate and systems for tracking pupils' attainment and progress are being used effectively to identify and tackle underperformance.
- Pupils feel safe, they are courteous and well behaved, engage enthusiastically in their learning and take serious responsibility for supporting each other at work and play.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 15 lessons and observed parts of lessons in all year groups.
- They held meetings with staff, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. They spoke informally to staff supervising at lunchtime and observed behaviour.
- Inspectors met with three groups of pupils, listened to some read and discussed their lessons.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documents relating to behaviour, safeguarding, improvement planning and evaluation, the school's own lesson observations, performance management and pupils' progress. They examined a range of pupils' books and took account of staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors took account of 46 responses to the online questionnaires (Parent View) and spoke informally to parents before and after school.

Inspection team

Prue Rayner, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Caroline Stone

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is a slightly smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is below average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups has increased over the past three years; it is now above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils whose first language is not English is increasing. It is below the national average.
- From 2011 to 2013 the school shared an executive headteacher with another local school. A full-time headteacher was appointed in September 2013 and a special educational needs coordinator has taken up post this term.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of the teaching of phonics in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1 so that pupils who find this aspect of their learning difficult receive highly skilled support.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that good practice is sustained over time and a greater proportion is outstanding by:
 - extending the range and variety of opportunities through which children in the Reception class can use and develop their learning both in the classroom and outside
 - making sure that teachers have continually high expectations of all pupils and plan learning activities which enable every child to make good progress, in particular the most able and those who require support
 - implementing planned opportunities for teachers to share and learn from the best practice in the school.
- Strengthen the leadership and management of the school by ensuring that middle leaders fulfil their responsibilities to lead teaching so that teachers receive regular and effective support and challenge.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Pupils' progress requires improvement. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics are well above average, but not enough pupils make good progress. Some pupils who are eligible for support from the pupil premium or who have special educational needs make less progress than they should.
- Children start school with skills and abilities that are typical for their age; historic inaccuracies in assessment mean it is difficult to analyse how well children have progressed through the Early Years Foundation Stage. Assessment at the end of their year in the Reception class in 2013 suggests that just over half of pupils reached the expected good level of development; however, current analysis of this cohort's attainment in Year 1 indicates that more pupils than this are working at the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics.
- At the end of Year 1, not enough pupils reach the expected standards in the phonics screening check (this assesses how well pupils use the sounds letters make to read and spell). Too few caught up with these expectations last year in Year 2. Pupils who find learning to read difficult are not using these skills well enough to sound out letters and read words and do not make the progress they need to.
- At the end of Key Stage 1 in 2013, a similar to national proportion of pupils achieved age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics and more attained the higher levels. Pupils eligible for the pupil premium made less progress and attained significantly less well than their peers in reading, writing and mathematics. The assessment of pupils who have special educational needs has not provided enough information to make sure their learning needs are effectively met.
- Across Key Stage 2, progress in mathematics has been below that achieved in reading and writing. Scrutiny of pupils' books shows that actions taken to improve teaching are beginning to secure better progress and the better use of calculation skills.
- Pupils whose first language is not English and those from minority ethnic groups make good progress and attain well.
- Across the school most pupils eligible for the pupil premium make less progress than their peers in reading, writing and mathematics. While their attainment is in line with that of similar pupils nationally, in some year groups their progress is significantly behind that of other pupils.
- Pupils achieve well across the range of subjects on offer, standards of presentation are good and purposeful opportunities to apply writing skills mean pupils apply their literacy learning in a range of contexts. Pupils say they enjoy the opportunity to achieve well across different subjects including physical education, science, history and religious education.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching has not been challenging enough over time to ensure that all pupils make expected and better progress; because of improved leadership it is now predominantly good in lessons. This has not, however, been sustained over a long enough period of time in all classes to accelerate the progress made by pupils whose learning has slowed.

- A small proportion of teaching still requires improvement because too much time is wasted giving pupils instructions and directing behaviour which means they lose interest or waste their time.
- In some lessons, teachers do not plan activities to develop the learning of the more able pupils enough. Extension activities are in place but they tend to consolidate progress rather than challenge thinking at a higher level. Teachers do not always respond to the progress being made by pupils in lessons so do not provide the extra challenge needed.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs varies across classes. In some lessons, the teacher and teaching assistant work closely to assess and evaluate pupils' progress and use this information well to plan the next activities. In too many lessons this does not happen, so pupils are not effectively supported to access learning at the right level.
- The teaching of phonics is not good enough; pupils are not given enough opportunity to hear and practise the sounds made by combinations of letters. In some lessons there are not enough opportunities for pupils to use their new learning. Where pupils experience particular difficulties, extra support is not specific enough to enable them to make good progress.
- In the Reception class, individual children benefitted from working with their teacher; however, the wider activities were not sufficiently well planned to excite and engage pupils to use their learning either in the class or outdoors.
- In the nursery class, children are offered a good range of opportunities through which they are supported to apply their learning. For example, a child worked with concentration to paint the inside of a cupboard to make a Gruffalo cave while others in the cave worked well together to put together a Gruffalo puppet show, carefully negotiating who would play the different characters.
- Teachers are using new systems of assessment effectively to plan and shape lessons that are better matched to pupils' ability. Questioning is used effectively to extend pupils' thinking and teachers use interesting content and lively presentation to engage and maintain pupils' interest. For example, in a Year 2 lesson, pupils made good progress in understanding directional language through practical activities and paired tasks where they created instructions together. More-able pupils were challenged to use measures of angle in calculating turns.
- Work undertaken to improve teaching and learning in mathematics has been effective in most classes. Work is better matched to pupils' abilities and calculation skills are taught and used well. There are good examples in pupils' books of the use of these to solve problems. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils made good progress in calculating percentages because high expectations were made clear, teaching was lively and direct and the teacher added extra challenge because pupils had made good progress with the core work planned. Teaching time was focused mainly on the pupils who found the learning challenging; as a result all pupils made good progress in their learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Throughout the school, pupils show commitment to their learning, they apply themselves with great concentration and speak articulately about the benefits of achieving well. Pupils are given a range of opportunities to contribute in lessons and respond quickly and attentively; there is no low level disruption. Pupils work collaboratively and share responsibility for each other's success seriously.

- Pupils understand the school's behaviour policy, they know that incidents of poor behaviour will be logged and followed up with parents if necessary. Behaviour at playtimes and as pupils move about school is good, movement between different lessons and activities is calm and no time is wasted. The good range of games and opportunities available at lunch times are used collaboratively by pupils so play is harmonious.
- Older pupils have a range of responsibilities which enhance their preparation for transition to secondary school and make a positive contribution to the good behaviour. For example, sports leaders were arranging a skipping competition at lunch time and pupils spoke clearly about the work of peer mediators, who help resolve conflicts but 'never take sides'.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Appropriate risk assessments are in place and staff training is up to date. Pupils understand how to keep safe when using the internet.
- Pupils say they feel safe at school, and that there is no bullying. Older pupils understand different types of bullying and strategies for dealing with it. All pupils know and talk about the school's anti-bullying week but younger pupils show less-detailed understanding of what bullying is. The headteacher has implemented procedures for logging when incidents of poor behaviour, racism and bullying occur.
- Attendance has been in line with the national average. Figures for the autumn term show improvement. A recent report by the education welfare officer recognises the rigorous actions being implemented by the new headteacher to tackle instances of poor attendance.

The leadership and management are good

- The school is improving rapidly because of the headteacher's rigorous, energetic leadership. Aply supported by the deputy headteacher she has challenged established practices, raised expectations and implemented rigorous performance management to ensure staff fulfil their responsibilities. Challenging expectations for all pupils to make good and better progress have been made very clear.
- The headteacher promptly identified the right improvement priorities, implemented rigorous checks on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress and quickly tackled weaker performance. Clear guidance is given regarding expected improvement. Plans are in hand to enable staff to learn from the best examples of teaching in the school.
- Mathematics and English subject leaders are now engaged in weekly monitoring activities and are using their leadership skills more effectively. Improvements in teaching and progress in mathematics are evident because of strong leadership and training.
- More rigorous analysis of staff performance has identified clear responsibilities for middle leaders; some are not yet fulfilling these so are not making a full contribution to the drive for improvement.
- Management procedures for tracking the progress of pupils have been improved. Senior leaders regularly review the progress made by every pupil. Where underperformance is identified, records include planned support and extra resources directed to maximise learning and progress. The use of the pupil premium has been revised to ensure greater focus is given to ensuring a direct impact on pupils' progress.

- The broad range of subjects provides very good opportunities for learning. Pupils use reading and writing skills effectively and standards of presentation are good. A wide range of work is displayed throughout the school and pupils say they appreciate the use of 'working walls' to support their learning. Pupils are given the chance to say what they want to learn about when they start a project and this drives interest and engagement.
- Spiritual, moral and social education is very strong; children are given the opportunity to reflect or pray at regular points throughout the day. At times, these moments have a sense of reverence and calm which contributes significantly to the school's ethos. Work across the curriculum particularly in religious education reflects deep insight; as one pupil said 'In God's family, we can talk about religion, we have mixed religions here and we are a mixed community but we are all part of the Holy Family School'. Pupils' knowledge of other cultures is less well developed.
- Parents have positive views of the school. Parents spoken to before and after school said they are very happy with the work of the school. They think the new headteacher is very approachable and, in several instances, parents mentioned that swift action has been taken to address longer-standing concerns.
- Pupils speak very highly of the sporting opportunities they are offered both within the school day and through lunch-time and after-school clubs. The primary sports funding is used to provide training to further enhance the leadership and quality of these opportunities. Pupils speak clearly about the difference these make to their enjoyment of school and to their health. A good measure of how well physical education is taught is the number of pupils who discussed their intention to pursue swimming and athletics beyond school.
- The local authority has given good support to the headteacher in establishing a well-evidenced analysis of the quality of teaching. Effective advice has been given to governors for improving the quality of performance management.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors took concerted action a year ago to seek and secure strong leadership for the school. They are providing rigorous support for the headteacher in securing improvements in checking how well staff are doing and making sure teachers' pay is related to performance. They know how well pupils are making progress and how the school's achievement compares with all schools nationally. Minutes of meetings, particularly those of the curriculum committee, show governors understand how teaching impacts on pupils' achievement and are challenging leaders to ensure the best use of resources. This includes the use of the pupil premium and the difference it is making to the progress and attainment of eligible pupils. Governors ensure safeguarding and financial arrangements meet statutory 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	117481
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	440422

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	214
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father Norbert Fernandes
Headteacher	Ginnette Stevens
Date of previous school inspection	14 October 2010
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