

Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School

Poulsom Drive, Bootle, Merseyside, L30 2NR

Inspection dates 19–20 November 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Planning for future improvement, including for the early years, is not focused sharply enough on raising pupils' achievement. It is too vague to allow school leaders to check quickly on the impact of actions that are being put in place.
- Middle leaders are not yet skilled enough to drive improvement in their area of responsibility.
- Over time, teaching has not been good enough to ensure that all pupils achieve consistently well in reading, writing and mathematics.
- There are times when teaching assistants are not as effective as they could be.
- Teachers do not always plan work that is at the correct level of challenge to help pupils to learn as much as possible.
- When work is too easy or too difficult, some pupils can become distracted from their learning and their behaviour is not good enough.
- Marking requires improvement because teachers do not always provide good guidance to pupils on how to improve their work. When advice is provided, teachers do not always give pupils time to check and correct their work so that they can make the necessary improvements and learn from their mistakes.
- There has been a lack of rigorous leadership in the early years. The quality of assessment and teaching, particularly in the nursery, has not been good enough overtime, which means that the early years overall requires improvement.

The school has the following strengths

- In the short time since his appointment, the headteacher has quickly established a very accurate view of the school's performance. He knows precisely what is needed to improve teaching and achievement and has the skill and expertise to achieve this.
- Senior leaders, including governors, are determined and ambitious for the school and its pupils. They work well together, and have reached out to other schools, the diocese and the local authority to help them to improve standards and the school environment. As a result, the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement is improving.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They and their parents are confident that staff care for them well.
- A wide and varied range of school trips, visitors to school and after-school clubs make the curriculum more exciting and enjoyable for pupils.
- Teaching and assessment in the early years is now improved in the Reception class and improving very quickly in Nursery class. The indoor learning area has improved and there are substantial plans underway to further improve the outdoor area.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in all classes taught by teachers and in sessions taken by teaching assistants. A learning walk around the school also took place.
- The inspectors met with a group of pupils and observed and spoke with pupils during lessons, play times and at lunchtime. They also listened to pupils reading.
- Meetings were held with staff, senior leaders and managers, members of the governing body, a representative from the local authority and a representative from the contracting company that completes work for the diocese. An inspector met informally with parents as they dropped their children off at school.
- A range of documents were considered by inspectors, including the school’s analysis of how well it is doing, the school development plan, information about pupils’ progress, checks on the quality of teaching, minutes of governing body meetings, and records relating to attendance and safeguarding. Inspectors also examined work in pupils’ books.
- Inspectors took account of 15 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and of summaries of the responses to three parental questionnaires recently distributed by the school.
- Inspectors also considered responses from 30 staff to the inspection questionnaire.

Inspection team

Louise Murphy, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Carol Machell

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than most primary schools.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through the pupil premium (additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority) is approximately twice the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is average.
- Most pupils are from a White British heritage and there are no pupils at the very early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language.
- The school provides part-time places for three and four year old children in the Nursery class.
- The Nursery class provides eight additionally resourced places for children with complex learning needs.
- The headteacher has been at the school for four terms. He took up the post on a permanent basis during April 2014.
- Four teachers have joined the staff since the previous inspection.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school provides a free breakfast for pupils before school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to at least good, so that pupils can make consistently good progress and behave well by making sure that teachers always:
 - plan activities that challenge pupils at the correct level, so that they are helped to remain focussed, learn as much as possible and respond quickly to staff instructions
 - ensure that teaching assistants are fully effective across the whole lesson
 - provide good advice when marking pupils' work and check that this guidance is followed.
- Improve the impact of school leaders by:
 - sharpening targets set in the school development plans, including in the early years plan, so that they are linked to pupils' progress and measurable enough to help school leaders to quickly evaluate the impact of their actions
 - building the skills of middle leaders so that they can be fully accountable for pupils' progress in their areas of responsibility and are able to check how well agreed actions are carried out.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The new headteacher is well supported by the assistant headteacher and governors. Together they have quickly and successfully embedded a new vision whereby staff work together to achieve the best outcomes for all pupils. The school is now improving steadily after a period of decline following the previous inspection and demonstrates the capacity to improve further. However, the rate of improvement has not been rapid enough to raise the quality of teaching or pupils' achievement to consistently good.
- Senior leaders check the quality of teaching and learning thoroughly and training is provided to support the development of individual members of staff. However, middle leaders are not yet fully involved in checking on the progress of pupils or on actions taken to improve standards in their areas of responsibility. They are aware of this and know that the headteacher is providing opportunities to help them develop their skills which they are keen to do.
- School leaders have a highly accurate view of how effective the school is and what needs to be done to improve standards. However, targets set in the school improvement plan are not linked closely enough to the achievement of pupils to help school leaders evaluate the effectiveness of their actions and improve more quickly.
- Pupils are now involved in determining what they learn, so staff can make sure that the curriculum includes aspects that interest and engage pupils. The curriculum is well planned and prepares pupils appropriately for life in modern British society. Pupils are taught to speak a modern foreign language (Spanish) and to celebrate religious and cultural festivals, such as Chinese New Year.
- The headteacher has introduced new systems for checking on pupils' progress. The information is used to provide pupils with extra help and support if they need it. Funding for pupils eligible for support through pupil premium is appropriately directed toward meeting the needs of disadvantaged pupils. This confirms the school's commitment to making sure that there is no discrimination and that all pupils have equal opportunities to succeed.
- The primary sports funding has been used well to increase pupils' participation in sporting activities. Specialist coaches from the local high school work with staff and pupils to further improve their skills and reluctant pupils are sensitively encouraged to join in. New equipment has been purchased and a wider range of activities are now available after school and during the day.
- The local authority, some local schools and the diocese have been more involved with the school since the headteacher took up his post. This is because he has asked for their support to address the areas for development that he has identified. The partnerships are having a positive impact on standards at the school.
- School leaders, including governors, make sure that staff and pupils are kept safe and statutory requirements including safeguarding are met.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body are highly committed to Holy Spirit school. They know the school well including about the quality of teaching, because they receive very detailed reports from the headteacher, they visit the school as often as possible and increasingly challenge the school's performance. Governors know the requirements relating to the management of teachers' performance and make sure that salary progression is linked to how effective teachers are. There are governors who are able to analyse pupils' comparative achievement data and there are a range of training opportunities planned to ensure all governors are fully up to date. The governors feel that their role is developing within the school because they are actively encouraged to get involved more and discuss school developments with the headteacher and staff.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- In some lessons, a few pupils lose interest in what they are learning because the work is too easy or too difficult for them. This can lead to distracted fidgeting which slows the rate of progress. Furthermore, some pupils do not respond quickly enough to staff instructions and requests, which prevents some lessons from flowing smoothly and without interruption.
- Around the school, pupils are usually polite and respectful towards each other and the adults around them. Most pupils are keen and show interest in their work and the activities on offer.

- There is an increasing range of opportunities for pupils to develop a sense of responsibility, which contributes toward pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, older pupils who have been trained to act as 'buddies' enjoy looking after their younger friends, helping them to behave well and enjoy school.
- The school councillors are pleased that they have been instrumental in helping to design and organise the new playground zones. Pupils are now able to do the things which they enjoy doing in a safer environment. For example, there is a zone to play football and a zone where pupils can sit quietly and chat.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils say they feel safe at school, they recognise that the security measures such as new fencing, have been put in place because their teachers want them to be very safe in school. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire agreed that the school keeps their children safe and staff care for them well.
- Pupils also know how to keep themselves safe because teachers make sure that they are aware of potential dangers, including when they are using the internet. What is more a range of visitors come into school to help pupils to understand what to do in risky situations. For example, 'Postman Pat' recently visited school to remind pupils about road safety.
- Pupils know about different types of bullying. They recognise that some pupils fall out sometimes but confirm that no 'real bullying' takes place at Holy Spirit. Pupils feel confident that if bullying did take place staff would help them to sort it out quickly and effectively.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Overtime, there has not been enough good teaching to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress and achieve well. However, there is clear evidence that the quality of teaching of reading, writing and mathematics has improved over this past year.
- The quality of marking is variable. Pupils are not always given clear enough guidance about what they need to do to improve their work. In addition, there are too few checks that pupils follow advice when it is given.
- Pupils learn well when teachers set work at a level that challenges pupils effectively and engages them in their learning. For example, during one Year 5 lesson pupils were developing their writing skills. Pupils had lots of ideas because they had taken part in a First World War experience visit and were reading a book about a real-life event which took place during a war. The work was challenging and set at the right level for different pupils, consequently they were fully involved and keen to learn. The teacher questioned pupils skilfully to check their understanding and pupils were encouraged to think hard about what they were about to write. Work is not always set at such an appropriately challenging level in all lessons.
- Pupils have an improving knowledge of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) because teaching is improving and pupils have many opportunities to read. Pupils are assessed more carefully and all younger pupils have a daily phonics session that is very closely matched to their level of ability. Pupils in Key Stage 2 read every day and improve their skills through reading in small groups with an adult as well as by themselves.
- After a period when the teaching of mathematics required considerable improvement, pupils are now being supported more effectively to develop their mathematical skills. For example, pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 are now taught in smaller sets so that staff can focus help and support. There is also an increased emphasis on basic skills development and new resources provided, so that pupils can use computer based learning in school and at home.
- Teaching assistants usually provide helpful support when they work with small groups of pupils and individuals. However, their talents are not so effectively used when teachers are introducing lessons or when they work too closely with one pupil and miss the opportunity to help others.
- Pupils enjoy working in groups, sharing ideas and learning from each other. Good relationships and the use of praise and encouragement are strong features that promote learning and most pupils are keen to do well. They say teachers make their lessons interesting and help them to learn.

The achievement of pupils**requires improvement**

- Since 2012, test results show that attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 usually just below average in reading, writing and mathematics. From their individual starting points, the progress made by pupils has not been consistently good enough, and therefore, achievement requires improvement.
- The school's own assessment data and inspection evidence confirm that pupils' achievement has improved. Pupils in classes across Key Stages 1 and 2 made good progress in reading, writing and mathematics between 2013 and 2014 and work seen in pupils' books suggests that this is set to continue. However, due to previously uneven progress across the school there is a history of underachievement that still needs to be addressed.
- The proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in the Year 1 national phonics check was well below average in 2014. However, systems were put into place including making sure that the teaching of phonics now starts in the Nursery class so that children get off to an earlier start with their reading development. All pupils are now encouraged to read daily and new books are filling the shelves so that there is a wider range of books available in school. There is great excitement as pupils and staff anticipate the grand opening of the new library.
- School leaders recognised that the teaching of mathematics needed to improve and they have put successful strategies in place to address this. However, despite some improvement, these systems have not been in place long enough to have had a full impact on standards.
- Pupils are now making better progress in writing because they have many opportunities to write in a variety of styles in different subjects, and they are increasingly using spelling, punctuation and grammar more accurately.
- There are now more opportunities made available to challenge the most able pupils. For example, talented mathematicians and scientists visit the local high school to be involved in more complex learning. Although in 2014 an increased proportion of pupils attained at the higher Levels 3 and 5 in Key Stages 1 and 2, overall the achievement of the most able pupils is not yet consistently good. This is because there are times when activities provided do not challenge the most able pupils well enough.
- The progress that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make is improving because assessment information is now well used to help staff provide focussed support on an individual or small group basis. However, when the least able pupils are working in the whole class situation the work is sometimes too hard for them and they do not learn well enough. Progress for these pupils is variable across classes and overall requires improvement.
- In 2014, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils was approximately two years behind in reading and almost one year behind in mathematics and writing, when compared to non-disadvantaged pupils nationally and other pupils in the school. However, current data shows that the attainment of disadvantaged pupils is very similar to other pupils in the school and the gap is closing with other pupils nationally. This indicates that gaps in attainment are successfully narrowing.

The early years provision**requires improvement**

- Children join the Nursery class with a diverse range of skills and abilities. There are eight additionally resourced places for children with complex learning needs. These children have skills significantly below other children when they join the Nursery class. Some of the children with complex needs remain at the school beyond Nursery and others do not. The numbers of children from this group who stay and leave the school at the end of the Nursery class varies from year to year.
- School leaders have identified that assessment information for children joining the Reception class has been over generous. As a result, it is difficult to accurately determine how much progress children have been making across the early years, this includes the children from the additionally resourced provision. New assessment systems have recently been put into place to make sure that assessment is now rigorous.
- What is evident is that since the new headteacher joined the school and since new teachers have been appointed to the early years, one of whom has joined very recently, the quality of teaching and children's achievement is now improving rapidly. However, the proportion of pupils who reach a good level of development is below national levels and overtime reading, writing and number skills have not been developed well enough. Although school leaders are now tackling this, children have not been sufficiently well prepared for the work that they are expected to do in Year 1 and thus the early years requires improvement overall.
- Children with complex educational needs are well supported in the early years and fully included in all the exciting activities that teachers plan. This helps children to develop a mutual respect for each other. The

early years is a calm harmonious setting in which children learn to behave well and to develop a positive approach toward their learning.

- The indoor classrooms are now developing well and opportunities are provided for children to access all areas of learning. There has been some recent improvements to the outdoor areas and further plans are in place helping to address the area for improvement identified at the previous inspection.
- Security has been improved, particularly around the Nursery class. Early years children feel safe and their parents know their children are kept safe by a caring staff team. There are well-developed plans in place to join together the nursery and reception areas so that the Nursery class can be more fully included with the rest of the school.
- The early years team has lacked effective management. However, school leaders have put plans into place to address shortcomings in leadership, management, teaching, assessment and achievement. These actions have made a positive difference in a short time.

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	104910
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	448265

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	204
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father Harris
Headteacher	Matt Byrne
Date of previous school inspection	5 July 2010
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