

Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School

Brunswick Street, Parr, St Helens, WA9 2JE

Inspection dates 9–10 December 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
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

- The teaching of reading, writing and mathematics is not yet consistently good across all year groups.
- Several teachers lack confidence in some areas of the curriculum, especially mathematics.
- Progress is not consistently swift enough to bridge the gaps in pupils' learning for them to reach higher standards, especially for the most-able.
- Although teachers tell pupils how to correct their work this is not always linked to exactly what is needed to make the work better.
- In 2014, the attainment of pupils in Year 6 and Year 2 was low, especially for most-able pupils.
- Progress for pupils currently in the school is not consistently good across all classes and all subjects.
- Assessment in early years is not used well enough to plan activities to build on children's learning so that they make good progress.
- The leadership of the early years is in transition and it is too early to judge the impact of the work of middle leaders.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher has successfully built on the foundations set by the previous leadership so that no time has been lost in moving the school forward.
- Governance is strong. Members know the strengths and the weaknesses of the school well.
- Overall, the rate of progress made by pupils in Year 1 to 6 is improving, with many making good or better progress.
- More pupils are reaching expected levels of attainment and the gaps between different groups are closing. In some year groups, disadvantaged pupils do just as well or even better than their classmates.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils are proud of their school and wear their uniforms smartly. Pupils are kept safe and feel safe.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a number of documents including: pupils’ achievement information, self-evaluation, improvement planning, records of observations of teaching, performance management information, and minutes of governing body meetings.
- Inspectors scrutinised books in classes and a selection of books separately from all year groups.
- Inspectors spoke to many pupils around the school, and held meetings with the school council and a randomly chosen group of pupils.
- Inspectors visited lessons of all classes, mostly accompanied by the headteacher. Her Majesty’s Inspector (HMI) observed the headteacher giving feedback to a teacher after an observation.
- Inspectors met senior leaders, middle leaders, four members of the governing body, two representatives from the local authority and a group of teaching assistants.
- The team looked at the school’s own survey of parents’ opinions and met with a group of parents. There were too few responses to the online questionnaire Parent View for any results to be displayed.
- Evidence from monitoring inspections undertaken in December 2013, and March and June 2014 was taken into account during this inspection.

Inspection team

Eileen Mulgrew, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Sharon Bruton

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- There have been significant changes in staff since the inspection in September 2013, including at senior level. The headteacher joined the school in September 2014 along with a new assistant headteacher; prior to that a seconded headteacher had led the school from shortly after the school's last full inspection.
- In November 2014 a seconded deputy headteacher joined the school. Governors have appointed a new early years' leader to start in January 2015. Currently the school employs two temporary teachers, one in early years and one in Year 1.
- Holy Spirit is an average-sized primary school.
- Children attend part-time in the Nursery and full-time from Reception onwards.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. There are few pupils from other heritage groups or who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding is twice the national figure. This funding is used to support pupils who are looked after by the local authority and those who are eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- In 2014, the school met the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good or better across year groups and subject areas, especially mathematics, ensuring that teachers:
 - strengthen their subject knowledge across all subjects of the curriculum
 - use all opportunities to give appropriate feedback so that pupils know exactly what action is needed to improve their work
 - plan activities that provide pupils with challenging work, especially for the most-able.
- Continue to accelerate pupils' progress so that more reach expected or higher standards.
- Further strengthen the leadership of the school so that all leaders share responsibilities to move the school forward by:
 - ensuring the new early years leader swiftly uses assessment information to plan provision so that children can make good progress and be ready for Year 1
 - enabling all subject leaders to have opportunities to enhance the subject knowledge of all staff, especially in mathematics.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The new headteacher has successfully built on the foundations set by the previous leadership so the momentum for improvement has not stalled. Staff and governors share her high aspirations. She has won the trust of the parents, the respect of the pupils and is harnessing the commitment of all staff to create a team culture that promotes the very best for the pupils at Holy Spirit. As a result, leadership and behaviour have improved since the last inspection.
- The headteacher is ably supported by the deputy headteacher who has brought leadership experience to his role. The new assistant headteacher has brought vitality, specific expertise and excellent practice in the classroom. She provides a strong role model for other teachers who have risen to the challenge to raise standards.
- Senior leaders promptly evaluated the effectiveness of all aspects of the school and reviewed the improvement plan to reflect the most pressing priorities for the school to work on. Central to this plan is the improvement of teaching.
- The headteacher has observed all teachers teach, given points for development and provided training so that any weaknesses are suitably tackled. A system for linking monitoring, coaching and staff training is at an early stage of development.
- Teachers' performance is managed well and their targets relate strongly to the pupils' achievement. Pay and progression is now linked carefully to the achievement of these targets and teachers know it is their responsibility to provide the evidence needed for pay decisions.
- Leaders responsible for English and mathematics are developing their roles well, despite the English lead being new to this role. Time is allocated for them to analyse pupils' progress information from which they decide how to support and challenge colleagues. As a result, they are starting to work alongside teachers to improve subject knowledge in these two subjects. However, this is at early stage and they cannot yet demonstrate the effect their work has had in bringing about improvements and raising standards.
- The assistant headteacher has taken over the role of leader for those pupils with disabilities and special educational needs and is in the process of assuring that the correct pupils are identified so that extra work is suitable for them.
- The headteacher is aware that the development of leadership of other subjects is now necessary.
- The subjects and themes that pupils are taught are broad and relevant to their interest. Visits or visitors linked to a theme to enrich pupils' learning. For example, during their study of the First World War, a visit by a disabled ex-soldier left a lasting memory with many pupils. Teachers are increasingly using the different subjects to encourage pupils to write at length; however, opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills in different subjects are missed.
- Equality of opportunity is promoted well and discrimination is effectively tackled. Pupils feel valued and well cared for so that they, in turn, care for their classmates. Leaders use the pupil premium funding effectively so that all pupils can access subjects and activities.
- The Catholic ethos permeates school life and provides strongly for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Religious education themes enable pupils to understand different cultures and be prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils enthusiastically spoke of the democratic process of voting for school council members; elected representatives take their responsibility seriously for consulting with their classmates and keeping them informed of developments.
- The local authority and diocese have provided effective support in facilitating the school's improvement. They secured leadership in the school while the governors appointed a substantive headteacher. The local authority has deployed learning consultants to train and advise staff. Officers have held the school to account by conducting reviews so that the school could check its progress.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance of the school is strong. Governors are ambitious for the school and are determined for it to become at least a good school as soon as possible. They have reviewed their structure and set up more appropriate committees. The appointment of new governors with particular skills has strengthened the governing body and responsibilities are shared out evenly. A monthly standards committee is a routine part of their monitoring work.
 - Governors have a clear and detailed understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Checks on pupils' achievement information are thorough. Minutes from their meetings show that governors are rigorous in their approach to holding leadership to account for their decisions. They ask challenging questions and through regular visits to school gather their own independent information which they share at meetings.

- Governors check the effectiveness of additional funding, such as pupil premium and the sport premium, to ensure it has the maximum effect on improving outcomes.
- Governors have taken tough decisions to improve the quality of teaching. They have strengthened their procedures to ensure that any increases in teachers' pay are linked to their performance. Plans are in place to set performance targets for teaching assistants.
- Safeguarding arrangements are up-to-date and thorough, keeping pupils and staff safe.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are polite and courteous to each other and to adults. Pupils look after each other and welcome new pupils or visitors to the school. All staff model high expectations for behaviour and, as a result, pupils' behaviour is good in lessons and around the school.
- Pupils consider that most staff manage behaviour effectively and stick to the guidelines when sorting out any issues.
- Pupils settle quickly in lessons because they want to learn and understand the value of learning. Mostly they listen well to teachers and other adults but occasionally a few younger pupils become restless if they are not interested at the start of a lesson.
- Older pupils are able to discuss the importance of valuing differences and how it is interesting to learn about other faiths and cultures different to their own. They particularly enjoyed learning about Judaism and Hinduism.
- Pupils appreciate the new organisation of the playground equipment as they say that everyone gets a chance to use it and there are no arguments about football.
- Pupils are very happy with the activities that are provided for them such as sports clubs, dance, cookery and karate. They have a healthy keenness to 'win' now they are involved in competitive sport activities which is an impact of the effective use of the sports premium.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils were involved in the creation of the anti-bullying policy and are now confident that bullying doesn't happen and that name-calling is a thing of the past.
- Pupils are confident that adults will sort out any worries. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations and can explain confidently what they know about the risks of using the internet and how to avoid them.
- Records of behaviour incidents are thorough and effectively used to follow through any issues until they are resolved. This information shows that incidents have drastically reduced which reflects the positive effect in improving behaviour over time and making the school safer. Any absences are followed up immediately and absence rates for all groups are rigorously analysed so that support can be given to pupils and their families. Consequently, attendance is in line with the average and rising, and there has only been one short term fixed exclusion this year.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- There is a mixed picture in the quality of teaching of reading, writing and mathematics. It is still not consistently good across all subjects and all classes. Some, but not all, of this is because some teachers are new to the school or newly returned and have not benefitted from training provided over the last year. Teaching in reading and writing is stronger than mathematics; similarly teaching in the foundation subjects is uneven.
- Many teachers have secure subject knowledge, but a few lack confidence in some areas of the curriculum, especially mathematics. This means that a few teachers do not have the skills to deepen pupils' understanding by setting challenging work which means that the rate of pupils' progress is not good enough in these classes, especially for the most-able pupils.
- Teachers have high expectations and are increasingly using assessment information to plan interesting activities which pupils enjoy and motivate them to learn. Older pupils talked about watching the play '*Romeo and Juliet*' which they used as a stimulus to write at length.
- Through building positive relationships teachers create an atmosphere where pupils feel safe and are

ready to learn. Attractively decorated areas display pupils' work so that they know their efforts are valued. For example, a model of trench life during the First World War portrayed a moving scene for pupils to develop empathy and compassion. Aids to learning are displayed and resources for mathematics and English work are plentiful.

- Teachers use the agreed behaviour guidelines to resolve any issues which may interrupt learning so that in most lessons pupils make expected or better progress.
- A few teachers have recognised the value in challenging most-able pupils more quickly and extending their learning, so that a group may be set a problem to solve at the start of a lesson. Teachers' questioning has improved and in several classes it is a strength.
- Marking is regular and comments from teachers acknowledge the efforts of pupils. However, this feedback, either written or verbal, is not always linked to exactly what is needed to make the work better.
- Many teaching assistants contribute to pupils' learning throughout the lesson by working with a group or supporting individual pupils so they can understand better. There is still an opportunity for them to make more of a difference to pupils' learning. Senior leaders recognise this and are taking steps to maximise the skills of teaching assistants to better match pupils' needs.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Results for Year 6 in 2014 showed that an average number of pupils attained the expected Level 4 in mathematics, writing and reading. Results in Year 2 were below average. Although progress for pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, in both these classes was swift last year, there were too many gaps from their past learning in these subjects for them to fully catch up, especially in mathematics.
- The number of pupils in Year 1 who reached the expected level in the phonics (sounds that letters make) screening in 2014 was below average. Leaders identified the reason for this and have taken action by, for example, starting phonics sessions from the time children start Nursery to support quicker progress.
- In 2014, too few pupils reached the higher levels in subjects in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Inspection evidence shows that the challenge for the most able pupils is inconsistent. In several classes most-able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently in lessons for them to work out problems for themselves and so deepen their understanding. However, a significant number of older pupils are successfully being challenged to attain the highest standard of Level 6 by the end of the year.
- Pupils' progress information, scrutiny of pupils' workbooks, observations of learning and talking to pupils reflects generally good progress from Year 1 through to Year 6, although it is uneven across subjects and classes especially for younger pupils. For all groups of pupils gaps in performance are starting to close. Older pupils especially show quicker progress and their attainment is rising.
- Pupils in the current Year 6 have challenging targets for tests in 2015 and are on course to reach them.
- Achievement for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs reflects that of their classmates; in some classes it is stronger than others. However, targeted support from teachers and teaching assistants to better meet their needs is starting to pay off.
- In 2014 the attainment gap in Year 6 for disadvantaged pupils and their classmates was just over a year in mathematics, just under a year in writing and just over a term in reading. Compared with other pupils nationally the gap in mathematics was over a year, and the same for reading; and two terms in writing. However, these gaps are starting to close and in several classes disadvantaged pupils are making swifter progress than their peers due to effective use of the pupil premium funding.
- Pupils enjoy reading and are very proud of their comfortable new library and the choice of books they can use. Through 'reading buddies' older pupils are helping younger pupils to become more confident in reading.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- Children start the Nursery class with skills, knowledge and understanding which is below that, and for some significantly below, what is typical for their age. Many have poor language and communication skills. By the time children leave Reception many have made the progress expected of them. However, the new headteacher recognises that this is not good enough and has taken steps to strengthen this key stage.
- The headteacher understands the strengths and weaknesses of the provision.
- Observations of children's learning are frequent and recorded rigorously. However, this information does not always reflect the exact level the children are working at or identify what children need to do to make

faster progress. Similarly this information is not used to create an accurate record of children's starting points in order to measure their progress over time.

- Despite attainment at the end of the Reception year being lower than national in 2014, children made the progress expected of them from their low starting points in reading and mathematics. Progress in writing is weaker and the school remains focussed on developing children's speaking and listening as a basis for developing writing.
- The staff in this phase ensure that children are kept safe and foster positive relationships with parents. Parents experienced real joy when watching their children take part in the nativity play.
- Much work has taken place to raise the quality of provision in the early years so that Nursery and Reception children can socialise together. Resources have been purchased to provide a range of interesting and varied activities. The addition of the outside wooded area as a contrast to the hard standing area enables children to explore and investigate as they feel safe. They share and take turns well.
- Behaviour is good because adults model respect and consideration so that children mimic this to each other.
- Effective routines mean that children settle quickly and this supports their social and personal development; the small number of Nursery children confidently work alongside their friends from the Reception year.

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	132188
Local authority	St Helens
Inspection number	450501

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	Pat Peel
Headteacher	Michelle Ravey
Date of previous school inspection	25 September 2013
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