

# Shrewsbury Cathedral Catholic Primary School

New Park Road, Castlefields, Shrewsbury SY1 2SP

**Inspection dates** 3–4 November 2015

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Strong leadership and governance have turned this school around. The acting headteacher, interim executive board (governors), local authority and diocese of Shrewsbury have successfully addressed the weaknesses that previously caused the school's decline in performance and effectiveness.
- Standards are improving rapidly and securely and pupils make good progress. Achievement gaps between different groups, such as those between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school and nationally, are closing quickly.
- Effective professional development of staff and intelligent recruitment have led to good teaching and learning. Accurate assessments of pupils' learning have led to more consistency in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are courteous, polite and respectful.
- Good-quality early years provision is led and managed very well. Reception children settle quickly. They are enlivened by the range of indoor and outdoor activities provided for them.
- Pupils enjoy learning within a broad range of subjects and activities. These include interesting topics, visits and projects. Pupils are effectively taught British values of respect and tolerance of different faiths, customs and cultures.
- Parents and carers are supportive and very pleased with the way the school has improved. They pay tribute to the efforts of staff and leaders, recognising, rightly, that their children are now doing much better at school than previously.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The school's action plans do not always set out how the actions being taken to improve teaching and learning are being checked. This makes it difficult for leaders and governors to test whether actions are sustaining improvements.
- Although improving, reading standards should be higher. Pupils make relatively slower progress in reading compared with writing and mathematics.
- In some lessons teachers and support staff do not challenge the most-able pupils or provide them with enough tasks that match their abilities.

## 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.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that in all lessons teachers and support staff adapt tasks or activities to provide more work that is pitched at the right level of challenge for the most-able pupils.
- Build on the improvements made to pupils' achievement and raise standards still further in reading by:
  - making sure that pupils in Key Stage 2 read widely and often so they experience a broader range of books, authors and genres
  - providing more opportunities for the most-able children in the early years and Key Stage 1 to practise reading independently and apply their knowledge of letters and the sounds they make (phonics) to break down unfamiliar words.
- Make sure that the school's leaders and governors set out in their action plans how they are evaluating and checking the impact of actions on sustaining improvement to the quality of teaching and learning.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The acting headteacher provides strong and effective leadership. Since joining in February 2015 she has transformed the school. Staff morale is high. Governors and leaders have galvanised the staff team to work together and reverse the school's previous decline in performance and effectiveness. Parents and carers have noticed significant improvements to the school and are very pleased with their children's progress. They are also confident that their children are safe, happy and secure in school.
- Effective and well-devised training and staff development have had a positive impact on teaching and learning throughout the school. The soft federation between the acting headteacher's own primary school and close links with other good or outstanding schools are improving teaching and developing still further the leadership skills of staff who manage subjects, aspects and phases of the school.
- There are well-focused plans for teachers and support staff to build on the improvements to their teaching. Subject leaders' roles and responsibilities are much clearer now than previously. Leaders are checking teaching and pupils' performance more often. The acting headteacher has put in place more opportunities for staff to monitor, support and challenge other colleagues as this aspect of leadership was very weak in the past. There is now good capacity across the school for sustained improvement as new middle leadership roles are becoming established and staff with management responsibilities acquire the necessary skills to be able to monitor, support and challenge other colleagues.
- The school's action plans are informed by an accurate assessment of what is working well and what needs to improve. Changes to the way pupils' progress is being measured, under new arrangements without National Curriculum levels, are well established and provide accurate evaluations of pupils' learning and progress.
- Targets in the improvement plan are realistic and achievable. Nonetheless, action plans do not always show how evaluations are being carried out or who is undertaking these checks. This makes it difficult for senior staff and governors to measure how successful each action is towards reaching the desired targets, particularly those aimed at sustaining improvements to teaching and learning.
- There is a well-planned curriculum providing pupils with interesting and varied topics and subjects, including a modern foreign language (French). Effective personal and social development programmes teach pupils British values of respect, democracy and tolerance. British values of respect and tolerance were embedded in the recent commemorations to mark the National and International Remembrance Day.
- In addition to the school's Catholic mission and faith education, pupils learn about a range of other religions, cultures and customs so that pupils are well prepared for life in a diverse and tolerant modern Britain. They are taught to stay safe by being made aware of the potential risks of online messaging or access to the internet. Pupils in Key Stage 2 took part in a special project to study Black history and civil rights. Older pupils said that they were inspired by the bravery and commitment of famous individuals who stood up for equality in the face of prejudice and adversity, such as Rosa Parks in the United States of America and Nelson Mandela in South Africa.
- The curriculum involves special projects to appreciate and understand other forms of diversity. For example, a Paralympian recently visited the school, which inspired pupils and helped them to appreciate that physically or mentally disabled people can overcome barriers to success and achievement.
- Additional funding for pupils eligible for the pupil premium is targeted well at those who need to catch up, including pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language. Support for these pupils is effective and tailored well to meet their specific learning needs.
- Primary school sports funding is used well to hire specialist coaches. Pupils benefit from the opportunities they have to be active participants in sports and team games as well as learning to adopt healthy lifestyles when attending after school clubs.
- The local authority and Shrewsbury diocese have been very effective in dealing with the issues that previously resulted in the school being placed in special measures. Close links through the soft federation and with other schools enable staff to see and share good practice. This is influencing the work of all teachers and support staff as well as improving the leadership skills of those new to managing subjects.
- **The governance of the school**
  - The school's governance is strong. Since the interim executive board (IEB) was established in March 2015, the governance of the school has been much more effective and decisive in dealing with the weaknesses that existed at that time.

- The school’s governance is extremely well led by the chair of the IEB. The five board members are highly skilled and have been instrumental in maintaining a clear focus for school improvement. Working closely with the acting headteacher, local authority and diocese, the IEB has acted swiftly and incisively to put in place policies and procedures that have sharpened the way the school is monitored, challenged and supported.
- The school’s governance has been very effective in turning the school around. The IEB has already prepared the way for a full governing body to be appointed by January 2016. Some members of the IEB will also be represented on the new governing board to ensure continuity. Preparations are also under way to secure the appointment of a permanent headteacher. The interim arrangements that led to the appointment of the current acting headteacher have been highly effective in securing vital improvements to the school.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The procedures used to recruit, interview and appoint new staff are robust. Staff vetting and child protection policies are up to date and reviewed systematically.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good**

- Observations of lessons and a scrutiny of pupils’ work and assessments show that good teaching is now more established and consistent across classes. This has led to: standards in reading, writing and mathematics rising very well; pupils who were previously underachieving catching up rapidly; and attainment gaps narrowing and closing between different groups of pupils across classes.
- In most lessons pupils are very engaged in their learning and expectations for both achievement and behaviour are high. Teachers and support staff expect pupils to work hard. Workbooks show that very little time is wasted, as pupils produce a lot of work. In lessons pupils interact with other pupils to share ideas and improve their knowledge and skills.
- A scrutiny of books shows greater consistency in the quality, form and structure of pupils’ writing. In mathematics books, there are very good opportunities for pupils to tackle problems and to learn through trial and error. Pupils learn to apply different methods of calculation and are provided with good opportunities in lessons to explain these.
- Teachers mark pupils work diligently and provide good pointers for improvement, showing pupils clearly the next steps in their learning. Pupils respond, in line with a much-improved marking policy, by answering teachers’ queries and comments by writing responses in their books. This interaction between teachers and pupils is helping pupils to grow in confidence and improve their learning and skills.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are taught and supported well. They receive a good balance of close support with many opportunities to work independently or with other pupils in a group. Assessments are accurate and enable teachers and support staff to monitor and check the progress pupils make towards their learning targets. Pupils in the very early stages of learning English achieve well and soon catch up as they grow in confidence and pick up spoken English quickly. They too receive an appropriate balance of skilled one-to-one support and integrated activities with the whole class.
- Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to correct their work so they learn from their mistakes. In some lessons, however, the most-able pupils are not always being challenged or provided with tasks that match their capabilities. Assessments show that some of the most-able pupils just fall short of their learning targets as a result.
- Assessment information about pupils’ learning and progress is sophisticated and accessible to leaders, governors and staff. The information sets how clearly the extent to which pupils have learned particular programmes of study in line with age-related attainment targets. This new format is now well-established in line with the new requirements of the National Curriculum without levels. Teachers and support staff are using this information to plan work for pupils, although in some lessons, tasks are not being adapted sufficiently to extend the most-able pupils.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils about their work and heard some of them read. Pupils are very keen and energised by the range of topics and projects they study, although older pupils in Key Stage 2 are not reading widely or often enough. Assessments show that pupils make relatively slower progress in reading compared with writing and mathematics.
- The teaching of letters and sounds is effective in the early years (Reception class) and Key Stage 1. Assessments show that pupils make good progress and can apply their knowledge of letters and the

sounds they make (phonics) to break down unfamiliar words. Nonetheless, there is still room for improvement as some of the phonics sessions observed during the inspection did not extend or refine tasks for the most capable readers to accelerate their progress further.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good**

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupil's personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are confident, mature and responsible. They form positive and warm relationships with other pupils. They appreciate what teachers and support staff do for them and are respectful of others' views, backgrounds, beliefs and customs.
- A rich and broad variety of projects, visits and special themes enliven pupils and make learning interesting and enjoyable. Residential visits for older pupils help them to take on responsibilities and work as part of a team. The very good range of creative and artistic work that the school provides, including music and the performing arts, make a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This results in good, well-rounded pupils, who appreciate their school and what it offers them.
- Pupils take care of their school environment and enjoy taking responsibilities such as being monitors and mentors for younger children. The election of school councillors and opportunities to represent the views of other pupils provide them with direct experience of representative democracy and communal responsibility to care for others.
- There are good systems in place to keep pupils safe and staff are well versed in child protection procedures. Pupils know what to do and who to go to if they are worried or anxious, reflecting the trusting and warm relationships that exist between staff and pupils.
- The pupils who attend the before- and after-school clubs behave very well, and show initiative and independence, as well as taking responsibility to care for other pupils. Parents and carers are very pleased with this recent initiative, particularly the flexibility and choices it offers for working parents, carers and family members.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils take pride in their appearance and in the school environment. They dress smartly in their school uniform, conduct themselves very well and inspectors saw no evidence of litter or untidy workbooks.
- Pupils learn about tolerance and respect through personal development programmes, special studies and religious education. The recent work to celebrate Black History Month provided good opportunities for pupils to look back on the achievements of famous figures in history. However, some older pupils spoken to did not fully understand the significance of some of the events they studied in relation to civil rights, racism and inequality.
- Pupils are attentive and well behaved in lessons. They willingly answer questions and are keen to help and support other pupils. Pupils cooperate when working in groups and are mature enough to work independently and show initiative. In some lessons, pupils drift off task when the work is undemanding or not matched to their abilities, although they are polite enough not to disturb others while waiting for more work.
- Attendance is consistently above the national average and pupils are punctual and well prepared for school each day. There is very little persistent absence and the school keeps good records of patterns of attendance to be able to follow up any absences on a daily basis.

## **Outcomes for pupils are good**

- Staff and pupils are set challenging targets and this has been very successful in improving outcomes for pupils. Good teaching and higher expectations have improved standards, as they are above those of last year's national average in both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.
- The most recent national assessment results, although unvalidated, reflect significant improvements to pupils' attainment and progress. These improvements have also been reported on during previous monitoring inspections. The national assessments also show that the progress made by all groups of

pupils in relation to their different starting points was significantly better than at any time over the last three years.

- Currently, pupils throughout the school are making good progress. The attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school and nationally has closed rapidly in Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics. In Key Stage 2 the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and others nationally has closed in writing and mathematics. In reading it is closing, although pupils make relatively slower progress, especially those that have the potential to exceed age-related standards in reading. The national assessments in 2015 show that the gap in reading at Key Stage 2 was less than a half of a school term, which is significantly smaller than previous years.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similarly good rates of progress towards their learning targets. They receive effective levels of support from teachers and support staff during lessons with their classmates, and when working separately as a group, or individually, during focused activities.
- The small number of pupils who join the school at different times who are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language achieve very well. They are well supported by adults who often interpret and guide them through reading and writing activities. They integrate and are supported by other pupils during lessons and at breaktimes so they quickly pick up spoken English and improve their confidence and language skills.
- Senior leaders and governors have recognised that there is still room for improvement in reading, where pupils' progress, particularly for the most able, is relatively slower than in writing and mathematics.
- Pupils make relatively less progress in reading in Key Stage 2 because they are not reading often enough and their choice of genres or authors tends to be limited. During lessons that specifically teach phonics in Key Stage 1 the most-able pupils are not always provided with sufficiently challenging work to help them spell more accurately or break down unfamiliar words into their composite letter sounds. The most recent Key Stage 1 assessments and work in pupils' books, particularly for the most-able pupils, show that this also affects the accuracy of their spelling when reading or writing independently.

## Early years provision

**is good**

- Most four- and five-year-old children start school with skills and abilities that are typical for their age, particularly in language, communication, mathematics and social development. Good teaching, strong leadership and very effective support enable the youngest children to get off to a flying start.
- The children experience stimulating indoor and outdoor activities that enable them to settle quickly, share resources and cooperate with others. The teaching and support given helps develop strong foundations for learning that prepares the children very well for Key Stage 1. The children's personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding in the early years.
- Resources are accessible to the children and areas are carefully planned to provide stimulating opportunities for play and learning. Adults, including volunteer parents, offer the children good-quality care, with many opportunities for the children to improve their physical, academic and emotional development in safe and secure surroundings.
- The children behave very well. They cooperate with other children when using computers; volunteer to read and share books with each other; show independence and are improving their skills when cutting, pasting and painting firework displays or when tidying away and moving to other areas for new activities.
- Adults intervene and support very well by asking key questions that enable children to think and organise their ideas and responses. The highly skilled teacher uses assessments and records of children's progress (learning journeys) to plan interesting and varied activities for the children. Workbooks, observations and assessment show that the teaching and support provided for children is usually of good quality and enables the vast majority to achieve well in all areas of learning.
- The teaching is good. Assessments indicate that a high proportion of children reach a good level of development by the end of the Reception year. In communication, literacy and mathematics, the majority of children are working at the starting level of the National Curriculum for Year 1 pupils well before they join Key Stage 1.
- Nevertheless, the most-able children could still be doing better, particularly in reading and in the early stages of independent writing. The teaching of letters and sounds is effective but not always demanding enough for those children who are ready to read and write independently.

- Adults engage very well with children, parents or carers so that early relationships with families are strong and trusting. This helps to settle children quickly into school so that their first experience of the early years is positive, enjoyable and productive.
- There is strong leadership of the early years. The staff plan and share ideas together and the actions taken to improve provision over the last 12 months have been highly effective. Action plans, however, do not specify how evaluations of provision are being carried out to ensure that improvements to teaching support and sustain improvements.
- The good quality of teaching and leadership shows that the school is well placed to secure continuous improvement, and reflect the high expectations that the staff set for themselves for the benefit of the children in their care.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	123554
<b>Local authority</b>	Shropshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10005243

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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	137
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Interim executive board
<b>Chair</b>	Ms Alison Jackson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Kerrie Lewis (acting headteacher)
<b>Telephone number</b>	01743 351032
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.shrewsburycathedralschool.co.uk">www.shrewsburycathedralschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:head@cathedral.shropshire.sch.uk">head@cathedral.shropshire.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	8–9 July 2014

## Information about this school

- This is a small primary school which includes early years provision comprising a Reception class for four- and five-year-old children. There are five other classes, two of which are single-aged in Years 1 and 2, and three are mixed-age classes in Years 3 to 6.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. Other pupils come from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds; the largest group is of Eastern European heritage. A very small number of pupils are in the early stages of learning English.
- The percentage of disabled pupils or pupils with special educational needs is lower than that of most schools.
- The school meets the current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school has received three monitoring inspections previous to this inspection as it was placed in special measures in July 2014. The school was judged to have made reasonable progress towards the removal from special measures during these monitoring inspections.
- The current acting headteacher joined the school in February 2015. She is also the headteacher of another local primary school. Shrewsbury Cathedral Catholic Primary School has established a soft federation with the headteacher's own primary school. As part of interim arrangements the acting headteacher divides her time each week between the two schools. The school is currently being governed by an interim executive board (IEB) and there will be a full permanent governing body in place in January 2016. The IEB and governing body are planning to appoint a permanent headteacher. The current acting headteacher will stay in post until a permanent headteacher has been appointed.



## Information about this inspection

- In addition to lesson observations: inspectors reviewed pupils' work; met with groups of pupils to discuss their work, behaviour and safety, or to hear them read; and asked pupils their views about the school.
- The inspection team held discussions with the acting headteacher, deputy headteacher and staff responsible for leading subjects of the curriculum. The lead inspector met all members of the interim executive board (governors), including the chair. A meeting was also held with one of Shropshire local authority's school improvement advisers.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils during lessons and checked the work in their books together with assessment information about their learning and progress.
- Inspectors spoke informally to a number of parents and carers to seek their views about the school. There were too few responses to the online Ofsted questionnaire (Parent View) to analyse, so inspectors considered the results and analysis of the school's recent survey of parents and carers.
- Inspectors spoke to staff to provide feedback on lessons observed and to seek their views about the way they are being supported. The lead inspector visited the new breakfast club and spoke to the member of staff leading this about the way the before- and after-school clubs are run.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including: the school's action plan; subject action plans; information about pupils' achievement, progress and performance; governing body minutes; and information relating to teaching, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Charalambos Loizou, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Heather Simpson

Her Majesty's Inspector

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