

Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School, Blackburn

Lynwood Road, Blackburn, Lancashire BB2 6HQ

Inspection dates

5–6 April 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders' efforts to improve standards have not been successful in all key stages. In 2015, there was a sharp decline in standards at the end of Year 6 and in the early years.
- Children do not make sufficient progress in the early years, and by the end of Reception in 2015 very few children were well prepared to start key stage 1.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement and, as a result, pupils do not make enough progress over time. Some groups in particular do not achieve well enough, such as disadvantaged pupils and the most able.
- Leaders' and teachers' expectations of the progress that pupils should make are not high enough.
- Assessment information about what pupils know and can do is not used precisely enough to ensure that learning activities for pupils are set at the correct level of difficulty to help them to make good progress.
- Systems to measure, track and evaluate pupils' progress are not fully in place. This limits leaders' and governors' ability to rigorously evaluate the progress of all pupils and groups of pupils.
- Leadership at all levels has not secured sufficient rapid and consistent improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection.
- Governance is not effective enough in holding the school to account for pupils' progress and attainment.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher has quickly identified the areas in which the school needs to improve. New strategies to improve teaching are resulting in some improvement in pupils' progress this year.
- The school promotes British values very effectively with a strong emphasis on mutual respect and tolerance.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around school. They speak highly of the respect shown by adults and pupils and say that school is 'like a family'.
- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that adults care for them well.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in all key stages so that it is at least consistently good by:
 - ensuring that assessment information about pupils' skills and knowledge is used well to set work at the correct level of difficulty so that pupils make at least good progress
 - giving pupils more opportunities to reason and to solve problems in mathematics
 - raising teachers' expectations of the amount of progress pupils should make
 - ensuring that teachers give enough support and explanation to pupils so that they understand what they have to do to be successful.
- Raise standards in all subjects and increase pupils' progress, especially in writing and mathematics, by:
 - increasing the proportion of children who achieve a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year
 - raising standards in phonics (the sounds that letters make)
 - accelerating pupils' progress in key stage 1 to make up for previous underachievement in the early years
 - raising standards by the end of Year 6 as measured by the national tests and teachers' assessments
 - increasing the proportion of most-able pupils who achieve above national average standards in all subjects.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - putting in place suitable systems to measure, track and evaluate pupils' progress and use these to accelerate progress of all pupils and groups of pupils, such as the disadvantaged and most able
 - using training and professional development to bring about improvements to teaching and assessment, particularly in writing and mathematics
 - making regular checks on the quality of teaching and using these to hold teachers to account
 - ensuring that all agreed policies are consistently applied in practice, such as the marking policy
 - developing the leadership skills of subject leaders so they can support senior leaders to raise standards and improve the quality of teaching in their subjects.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management **requires improvement**

- Since the last inspection, leaders and governors have not secured consistent improvement in pupils' attainment and progress. Some weaknesses in the quality of teaching in mathematics and writing, identified at the previous inspection, remain. Checks on the quality of teaching have not been successful in raising standards in all key stages.
- Repeated changes in leadership and governance and constant staff turnover have limited attempts to bring about improvement.
- Systems to measure, track and evaluate pupils' progress are not fully in place. This restricts leaders' and governors' ability to check on, and evaluate, the performance of different groups of pupils. As a result, some groups, such as disadvantaged pupils and the most able, do not achieve as well as they should.
- Until recently, teachers have not been held rigorously to account for the progress that pupils make and expectations are too low.
- Subject leadership requires improvement because leaders have not been effective enough in raising standards consistently in their subjects. Systems to assess how well pupils are achieving are not fully in place and not enough has been done to ensure that all teachers clearly understand the standards expected in their pupils' work, particularly in writing.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and topic books show that the full range of subjects is studied. Extra-curricular activities and educational visits are popular with pupils and enhance their learning. In particular, there is good evidence of pupils learning about places and their location through the study of simple maps in geography. However, the quality of work in topic books in some year groups is of a lower standard when compared with work in English and mathematics.
- The new headteacher has quickly identified the improvements needed to raise standards. He has set much more ambitious targets for pupils and has worked with staff to improve the quality of teaching. For example, there is a new marking policy to improve the effectiveness of teachers' marking and, as a result, increased progress is evident in pupils' work. However, there are some minor inconsistencies in the implementation of the policy so it is not equally effective in all classes and subjects.
- The new headteacher has motivated staff well and there is a much stronger culture of improvement and ambition for pupils. Staff fully understand the headteacher's vision which he has communicated well. This academic year, and particularly since his appointment, there is a clear improvement evident in pupils' work and standards are rising, particularly in the early years and key stage 2. A new policy to hold teachers rigorously to account for the progress pupils make has been implemented, but the full impact of this is not yet evident.
- The school makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through a variety of activities. For example, pupils have the opportunity to work with an artist to create high-quality art work which will be exhibited in school and at a local museum and art gallery. Pupils' sketchbooks show the good quality of their work.
- The school prepares pupils for life in modern Britain very well through the promotion of British values. In particular, pupils speak of the importance of respecting all people including those who may have a different faith or cultural heritage. They understand democracy and vote for members of their school council, who meet regularly to represent the views of each class.
- The physical education and sport premium funding is spent wisely. Pupils demonstrate a good enthusiasm for sport and say that they particularly enjoy representing their school in inter-school competitions. They understand the features of a healthy lifestyle, such as keeping fit and having a healthy, but balanced, diet.
- The school has received extensive support from the local authority and the Diocese of Salford, particularly during this academic year. Senior leaders and the governing body have welcomed this support and improvements are becoming evident in pupils' work and in improving standards. A good example of the impact of this support is in the early years where there is a recent increase in children's skills and knowledge as the result of better teaching and much more effective assessments of what they know and can do.

■ The governance of the school

- Governance requires improvement because, since the last inspection, improvement has been too slow and inconsistent and leaders and teachers have not been held to account. The governing body does not challenge the school enough and the evaluation of pupils' progress is not rigorous enough. This means that groups of pupils, including the most-able and disadvantaged pupils, do not achieve as well as they should. The pupil premium funding has not been spent effectively to raise standards for disadvantaged pupils.
- The governing body has worked tirelessly since the last inspection to bring about stability and to avoid school closure. They have secured the full support of the Diocese of Salford to ensure that the school remains open and have appointed a substantive headteacher. Governors acknowledge that this has been the focus of their governance and that, in supporting the school, they have not given sufficient challenge to improve.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Policies to ensure that pupils are safe are in place, as is appropriate training for staff. Relevant checks are made when recruiting new staff, and visitors are carefully vetted when they arrive. Safeguarding records are detailed and kept securely. School leaders and staff work with parents, and with other agencies as required, to ensure that pupils are safeguarded. Pupils' safety is of high importance and pupils say that they feel safe and well looked after by adults in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **requires improvement**

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because pupils make slow progress over time. Until recently, teachers' expectations of the quality of pupils' work were too low. Expectations are rising as the result of the headteacher's high expectations of staff. Regular checks on pupils' work and feedback to teachers from school leaders are further raising expectations.
- Teaching assistants are skilled and work very hard to support pupils. However, when work set for pupils is too difficult, or lacking guidance and explanation, there is an over-reliance on help from teaching assistants.
- Assessment information is collected by teachers to establish what pupils know and can do. However, it is not always used well to precisely target the skills and knowledge that pupils need to develop next, particularly in mathematics and writing. When the work is too easy or too difficult, pupils' progress slows as a result. In particular, most-able pupils are not sufficiently challenged to make rapid progress and achieve above national average standards.
- In mathematics, opportunities for pupils to use and improve their reasoning and problem-solving skills are underdeveloped. These skills are part of the aims of the mathematics National Curriculum and, under the guidance of the headteacher, a mathematics specialist, teachers are beginning to focus more on developing pupils' skills in these areas. This work is at an early stage, so the full impact is not yet evident.
- Strategies to improve the quality of teaching are having a positive impact and some improvements in pupils' progress are evident. Although not yet consistently applied, the new marking policy is ensuring that teachers are giving more effective guidance to pupils to help them to understand how they can improve their work.
- Another strategy which is enabling pupils to make better progress is the focus on developing pupils' language skills, particularly for those pupils who have English as an additional language. An example of this was seen in a writing session where a teacher asked pupils to consider and discuss whether the word 'may' would be used for a prediction or for something that had definitely happened. One pupil correctly replied that it would be used for a prediction, because something may happen but also may not. During the inspection, teachers were often observed gently correcting pupils' language or asking them to think about their language choices. One boy was prompted to consider if the phrase 'how much' was correct, and he reconsidered and correctly said, 'how many'.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils show a good and increasing awareness of how to be a successful learner. One example of this is the way in which they check and assess their own work and that of their peers. They enjoy helping each other to improve.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and talk about the way pupils and staff respect each other. They enjoy learning about each other's cultures and religions and about how there are many similarities between people who may at first appear different. They say that school is a place that is welcoming to all. Some pupils told an inspector about how pleased they are to be able to help new pupils settle into school by being able to speak to them in their first language. They are proud of their ability to help such pupils.
- Pupils show a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, for example when using the internet. They understand that there are different types of bullying and say they would be happy to talk to adults if there was a problem. Pupils say that any bullying is rare in school, as is any derogatory language, and that any issues are quickly resolved.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. In lessons and around the school they behave well and they take care of the school environment. Pupils are polite and were thoughtful and well mannered when talking to inspectors.
- Pupils listen well to their teachers and respond promptly when asked to pay attention to adults and listen. They work hard and want to do well. Pupils usually take pride in their work, particularly in English and mathematics, although in other subjects this is sometimes less evident.
- This academic year, leaders and staff have worked hard to raise attendance rates and reduce persistent absence. Their strategies have been successful. The breakfast club helps pupils to come into school early and makes a contribution to improving attendance and punctuality. Only a very small proportion of pupils are persistently absent. Overall attendance is improving and is getting closer to that which is typical for most schools.

Outcomes for pupils require improvement

- After an improvement in standards at the end of key stage 2 in 2014, there was a dip in 2015. The school's results did not meet the government's floor standards which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6. Pupils were not well prepared for their next stage of education having made less progress than pupils in most schools, especially in writing and mathematics.
- In the early years, very few children reached a good level of development at the end of Reception in 2015. This encompasses the skills and knowledge across a range of subjects which ensure that children are well prepared for entry into key stage 1.
- In 2015, a smaller proportion of most-able pupils achieved above-average standards (Level 3) at the end of key stage 1 in reading and in mathematics than was the case nationally. In writing, a slightly greater proportion achieved above-average standards. In key stage 2, a significantly smaller proportion of pupils achieved above-average standards (Level 5 or above) in reading, writing and mathematics compared with schools nationally. Currently, although standards are rising, the proportion of pupils working at above-average standards is lower than is typical in most schools.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not achieve as well as other pupils in school. In 2015, their attainment was lower than for other pupils at the end of every key stage. Attainment for this group is rising but is variable, so in some year groups attainment is higher than for other pupils and in some year groups it is lower.
- At the end of each key stage, the attainment of pupils who speak English as an additional language is lower than for other pupils because their progress is slower. Pupils who have special educational needs or disability, and pupils who need to catch up, make similar variable progress to other groups in school.
- At the end of key stage 1 in 2015, standards improved on previous years and pupils achieved broadly average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. This represented good progress from below average starting points on entry to key stage 1.

- In 2015, an above-average proportion of Year 1 pupils achieved the required standard in the phonics screening test and this was an improvement on the previous year. However currently, most pupils in Year 1 are working at a below-average standard, having entered key stage 1 with below-average skills in phonics and in reading, writing and mathematics.
- This academic year, pupils' work shows improving progress across all key stages with a clear acceleration in the pace of progress since the appointment of the new headteacher. At the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2, most pupils are now working at levels which are broadly typical for their age.

Early years provision

requires improvement

- The overall effectiveness of the early years requires improvement because children do not make enough progress. From below-average starting points, particularly in communication and language, too few pupils reach a good level of development which ensures that they are well prepared for entry into key stage 1. In 2015, very few children achieved the good level of development. In addition, funding to raise the attainment of disadvantaged children has not been spent effectively.
- Until recently, the leadership and management of the early years have not been effective enough in bringing about improvement. From children making good progress at the time of the last inspection, there has been a considerable decline in standards as the result of teaching that required improvement. However, a new leader took up her post in November 2015 and there has been a noticeable improvement in the effectiveness of the early years provision since then.
- The new early years leader has a clear vision for improvement and has high expectations and ambition for the children in her care. She has put into place new assessments and records of what children know and can do, and these are effective in helping staff to pinpoint the skills and knowledge that children need to have to make good progress. As a result, progress is increasing.
- After a dip in standards in 2015, standards are rising again. However, there is a legacy of underachievement to be made up, so currently standards are below average, but improving. For example, the teaching of phonics is effective but, currently, children do not have the level of skills and knowledge expected at this point in the year.
- Teaching is improving. For example, adults were observed using questioning and discussion with children very well to help to develop their language skills. This included children at an early stage of learning to speak English. One group of children was observed following instructions using language to develop their understanding of words and phrases such as 'on top of' or 'below'. They enjoyed putting various toys in different positions in response to instructions and showed a developing understanding of the relevant language.
- Children behave well and show positive attitudes to learning. The school promotes their personal development and welfare well. Children are happy and settled, and a small group who talked to an inspector showed a good understanding of how people should treat each other. They had been listening to a story about a group of animals that would not help a little hen. The children said that they would have helped the hen 'because that would be kind'.
- Staff work well in partnership with parents and families to share information about children's learning and to help them to settle into school.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 119510 |
| Local authority | Blackburn with Darwen |
| Inspection number | 10002285 |

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 187 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Nicholas Kennedy |
| Headteacher/Principal/Teacher in charge | Michael Parker |
| Telephone number | 01254 54851 |
| Website | www.sacredheartblackburn.co.uk |
| Email address | michael.parker@sacredheart.blackburn.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 11–12 December 2013 |

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is above average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and for looked after children) is below average.
- Almost all pupils are from minority ethnic groups and two thirds of all pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The school did not meet the government's 2015 floor standards which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about governors' information and duties, nor is there a link to the school's performance tables on its website.
- The school provides a breakfast club every morning.
- Since the last inspection there has been great staffing and leadership instability. The last substantive headteacher left at the end of the spring term 2014, and there has been temporary leadership in place until the successful appointment of the current headteacher who took up his post in January 2016. A new assistant headteacher took up his post in February 2016 and will become the acting deputy headteacher from the start of the summer term following the resignation of the current deputy headteacher. One senior leader, responsible for pupils who have special educational needs or disability, retires at the end of the week of the inspection and another member of staff will take on this role from the start of the summer term. In November 2015, a new Reception teacher and early years leader took up her post and three new teachers joined the school in September 2015.
- The school has been under the threat of closure for several years. This has now been resolved and the school will remain open with the full support of the Diocese of Salford. The interim executive board which was in place at the last inspection was replaced by the current governing body in 2014.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors gathered a range of evidence from the school's documentation, assessment information relating to pupils' progress and attainment, work in pupils' books and observing in lessons. Documents examined included safeguarding records, improvement plans, school policies and external reports from the local authority.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across a range of lessons and subjects, and three of these were made jointly with the headteacher. In addition, the lead inspector observed the headteacher giving feedback to staff.
- Two groups of pupils met with inspectors who also talked to pupils informally at break and lunchtime while observing their activities.
- The teaching of phonics and reading was observed and one inspector heard some key stage 1 pupils read.
- Meetings were held with representatives from the local authority, a representative from the Diocese of Salford and with the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. Meetings were also held with the headteacher, senior leaders, teachers and subject leaders.
- Inspectors could not take account of responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as there were too few to view, but one inspector talked to a group of eight parents at the start of the school day.

Inspection team

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|--------------------------------|------------------|
| Andrée Coleman, lead inspector | Ofsted Inspector |
| David Woodhouse | Ofsted Inspector |

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