

# Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School

Brunswick Street, Parr, St Helens, Merseyside WA9 2JE

## Inspection dates

10–11 January 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
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	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently good or better, across key stages and subjects.
- Pupils' progress across the school is inconsistent and assessments of how well pupils achieve are not always accurate.
- The achievement of boys lags behind that of girls in almost every year group and subject. Tasks set for pupils are not consistently challenging.
- Staffing turbulence over the last couple of years has resulted in inconsistencies in pupils' achievements and in the quality of teaching. Leaders have not been able to drive improvements as rapidly as they would have liked.
- Leaders, including governors, do not always hold teachers stringently to account for the quality of their teaching and the progress pupils make.
- Pupils in key stage 2 do not make rapid enough progress in mathematics and reading.
- Senior leaders are not rigorous enough in checking the quality of teaching, learning, assessment and the progress that different groups of pupils make, especially that of disadvantaged pupils.  
Governors do not hold senior leaders to account rigorously for the use of the pupil premium funding and its impact on raising standards and improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

### The school has the following strengths

- Leadership and teaching in the early years are growing strengths of the school. Nursery and Reception children make good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils feel safe and are looked after well. They behave well, understand how to keep themselves safe and develop strong friendships.
- Leaders and governors are ambitious for all pupils. The headteacher and her new, stable staff team have ensured that a culture and ethos of success and positivity permeate the school.
- All staff promote pupils' personal development and welfare well. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is good and their attitudes show that they value respect and tolerance.

## Full report

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

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - tackling inconsistencies in teaching, learning and assessment
  - ensuring that pupils' progress is clearly defined and understood
  - ensuring that more accurate information about pupils' progress is analysed and evaluated so that leaders can pinpoint more accurately the next steps needed for improvement
  - rigorously holding leaders at all levels to account for the progress of all groups of pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged
  - ensuring that governors have accurate and timely information in order to more fully comprehend the strengths and weaknesses of the school, so they can challenge senior leaders more rigorously.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, particularly in mathematics and reading, by:
  - better understanding pupils' starting points, and planning suitable activities to challenge pupils at their appropriate level and deepen and develop their knowledge, skills and understanding
  - ensuring that staff check pupils' learning and progress carefully in lessons, correcting errors and misconceptions in order for the pupils to know their next steps and what they need to do to improve.

An external review of governance 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 previous inspection, leaders and governors have been hampered in their efforts to improve the school by a range of staffing issues. As a consequence, although there has been some success in improving teaching, pupils' progress is not yet uniformly good in all year groups and subjects because the quality of teaching is too variable.
- Leaders at all levels are involved in keeping a close eye on the quality of teaching and learning. Many checks are made and a wealth of information is gathered. However, the impact of this monitoring has yet to have the desired effect in securing consistently good teaching and learning.
- Leaders and governors have a generous view of their overall effectiveness. While strengths do exist, for example, in pupils' behaviour and in the early years provision, these are not as evident across other areas of the school. The pace of improvement has been too variable.
- Leaders and governors have not held teachers to account closely enough for the progress of pupils, particularly that of disadvantaged pupils. Minutes of governing body meetings show that governors have not provided enough challenge. Governors have relied too heavily on the recommendations of the headteacher.
- The school's priorities are clearly set out in the comprehensive development plan. New strategies and initiatives have been introduced to improve teaching, learning and assessment, and teachers' targets have been linked to these priorities. However, as yet there is limited evidence of the extent to which leaders' actions will improve teaching and learning.
- The use of the pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils has led to variable outcomes for this group over time. In 2015, differences between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and that of others nationally started to close at key stage 2. Indeed in some areas, disadvantaged pupils performed better than others nationally. However, in 2016 this improvement was not sustained, in part due to staffing issues and some extenuating circumstances. Currently, the majority of disadvantaged and most-able disadvantaged pupils are achieving in line with or above their peers.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has improved since the previous inspection. The special educational needs leader has raised the profile and subject knowledge of staff and has included a wide range of external specialists to support the achievement of these pupils. The engagement of parents has improved, as has resourcing. However, inconsistencies in the quality of teaching mean that outcomes for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities vary over time.
- The range of subjects taught is broad and balanced. Subject leaders have received training and know the standards pupils achieve in their respective subjects across the school, although it is too early to know at this point what overall impact their work is having on improving pupils' outcomes.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. This has been possible as a result of the headteacher's effective leadership in this area. Mutually respectful relationships exist between pupils and adults. Pupils clearly embody British values in the way they behave in and around school. Visits and visitors enrich the curriculum, as exemplified by the visit of an author during the inspection. There is a particularly strong spiritual ethos in the school.
- The primary physical education and sport funding is used well. Specialists are employed to develop and enhance pupils' skills and improve teachers' subject knowledge. For example, the dance specialist links her lessons to the topic pupils are studying, not only developing their physical skills, but also enhancing their knowledge and understanding of their topic.
- Newly qualified teachers feel well supported and their induction into the school's ethos, expectations and procedures is effective. They benefit from an appropriate programme of professional development. The newly qualified teachers are clear about procedures for dealing with safeguarding disclosures.

### **Governance of the school**

- Governors are extremely supportive of the headteacher. As a group, they are very ambitious for the school and have had to face some challenging issues recently. However, the governing body is still coming to grips with its role of holding teachers to account for the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils.
- Not all governors have a secure enough understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school or are knowledgeable enough about the achievement of current pupils. This means that some governors lack sufficient skills to rigorously probe leaders about what they are doing to improve performance and raise standards.
- Governors have reviewed and noted the issues around the dip in performance of disadvantaged pupils in 2016 and have put in place measures to diminish the gaps.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All staff demonstrate a clear knowledge and understanding of the most recent guidance and information. Adults working with pupils understand how to report any concerns they may have. Staff are well informed and vigilant.
- The safety of pupils is of paramount importance. Pupils say that they feel safe. They know whom to talk to if they have concerns or worries.
- The learning mentor is effective in dealing with any concerns and issues and is always available and on hand to support pupils.

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

**Requires improvement**

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because it is not consistently good or better across the school. It does not enable all disadvantaged pupils or pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to make good progress.

- Teaching for the most able pupils requires improvement because the challenge provided by teachers across a range of subjects is inconsistent. For example, in an upper key stage 2 mathematics lesson, the most able pupils had to really grapple to solve a time-related task, whereas in a key stage 1 class, the most able pupils were getting everything right all the time and the work was clearly too easy.
- In pupils' books, weaker teaching is reflected in work that is too easy, with little evidence of an increasing level of difficulty, either during the lesson or over time. In mathematics, pupils lack practice in problem solving, reasoning and applying their mathematical knowledge.
- The quality of feedback to pupils, including written feedback, is variable. The best teaching closely follows the school's policy. Where teaching is less effective, the school's policy is not followed closely and feedback is not clear enough or not done in a timely manner.
- Where pupils make good progress, teachers have good subject knowledge, show pupils how to do their work and have clear goals for pupils' learning. They set work that challenges pupils of different abilities and notice any misconceptions. For example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, the most able pupils were grappling with a reasoning problem related to time. As a result of appropriate questioning by the teacher, these pupils were able to unlock the problem and begin to solve it.
- Overall, the work of additional adults is effective. These staff are purposefully occupied in supporting pupils through effectively planned activities. However, at times, they are less effective and learning time is lost. When this happens, opportunities to improve pupils' learning are missed.
- Leaders and governors have made reading a key priority for improvement within the school. Consequently, the current teaching of phonics and guided reading in the early years and in Years 1 and 2 have strengths, which are enabling pupils to acquire the necessary skills to become more fluent and accurate readers. Groupings are appropriate and teachers' good subject knowledge, along with the effective use of assistants, enable pupils to make progress.
- Pupils enjoy their topic work and like learning a range of subjects. The quality of the teaching, learning and assessment is variable across subjects. However, within this variable picture there is some effective practice. For example, in Spanish in key stage 2, the teacher's enthusiasm captured pupils' attention, encouraging them to develop and speak the language.
- Mutually respectful relationships are evident between adults and pupils. In the Nursery, while some children were being taught how to measure and mix the ingredients for a Polish cake in an adult-led session, their levels of concentration were excellent. Meanwhile, the majority of other children showed good behaviour and independence while engaged in activities they had decided on for themselves. These positive relationships, courtesy and politeness are also evident outside the classroom and contribute positively to the orderly atmosphere in the school.
- Homework is regular and appropriate to pupils' ages and stages of development. Most pupils say that they enjoy their homework. For those who are unable to finish it at home, the school has set up a homework club.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils say that bullying is rare and are adamant that, if it does happen, it is dealt with swiftly and effectively.
- Pupils feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe. They are aware of what to do if an inappropriate contact is made with them, for example when using social media.
- The pupils demonstrate respect for one another, have positive attitudes, and are polite and well mannered.
- Pupils are punctual to lessons. As a result of the effective work of the learning mentor, persistent absence among some of those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, boys and some disadvantaged pupils is reducing. Overall attendance is broadly in line with the national average.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils say that behaviour in class and around the school is good. The school is an orderly place. Playtimes and lunchtimes are organised effectively and pupils behave well.
- Pupils are polite, well mannered and give a warm welcome to visitors. In the early years, children's behaviour is excellent and throughout the school, pupils work well together, cooperate and support each other well and make strong friendships.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Requires improvement**

- Most children start school with skills and knowledge below those typically expected for their age. Increasingly, they make good progress through the early years.
- In 2016, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was broadly average. Most pupils made the expected progress from their starting points and the proportion working at greater depth compared well with the national average. In previous years, standards in key stage 1 had been below average.
- The outcomes of the 2016 Year 1 phonics screening check were below the national average.
- Pupils' progress in key stage 2 dipped in 2016 compared with an improved picture in 2015, where progress measures were either in line with or above national figures. Current assessment information shows that improvements are being made although differences between groups of pupils still persist.

- Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils show a mixed picture. Published data in 2016 shows that disadvantaged pupils did not perform as well as others nationally. Currently, the majority of disadvantaged pupils are achieving in line with their peers.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make variable progress from their starting points over time and do not perform as well as others nationally in a range of subjects. Currently, a minority of pupils are achieving in line with their peers. With the new leader and a now stable staffing team, there is evidence to suggest that improvements are beginning to happen.
- In 2016, at the end of key stage 2, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard was broadly average in writing, science and in English grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- Many of the most able pupils do not make good enough progress from their starting points. In some classes, most-able pupils complete the same work as the middle- and lower-ability pupils. However, where teaching is more effective, most-able pupils are challenged to grapple with concepts. When this happens, pupils' thinking skills are developed, their learning is deepened and they make better progress.

### Early years provision

**Good**

- Leadership and teaching in the early years are growing strengths of the school. Leaders and staff have made rapid improvements in a relatively short space of time. There is clear capacity to improve this provision further.
- The proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year has improved steadily over the last three years, although it is still below the national average.
- The Nursery is a bright and stimulating environment where children are well supported, happy, safe and engaged in the activities provided. Their behaviour and attitudes are excellent.
- The good-quality resources, indoors and outside, provide an exciting stimulus for children to initiate their own learning. For example, three children were observed booking a holiday to a favourite resort at the airport kiosk, signing their passports and flying off in their aeroplane.
- Children are well supported by adults and have a thirst for learning. For example, in the outside area of the Nursery, children were loudly learning and practising their counting skills, whilst bouncing a ball on their parachute.
- The procedures for assessing children's progress are improving and the new leader has created an effective tracking system in order to more precisely measure children's progress relative to their starting points. Currently, children are making good progress in most areas of their learning in both the Nursery and Reception classes.
- Partnerships with parents are strong. Activities to involve parents are regular and valued. There are opportunities for parents to share with their children's teachers good learning that they have observed out of school. The school actively seeks views from parents to contribute to their children's learning.

## School details

Unique reference number	132188
Local authority	St Helens
Inspection number	10024113

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 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	227
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Terry Shields
Headteacher	Michelle Ravey
Telephone number	01744 678670
Website	<a href="http://www.holyspirit.st-helens.sch.uk">www.holyspirit.st-helens.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:holyspirit@sthelens.org.uk">holyspirit@sthelens.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	13–14 November 2014

## Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about pupils' performance on its website.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above the national average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is below average.
- The early years provides for children of Nursery and Reception age. Pupils in key stages 1 and 2 are taught in six single-age classes.
- There is a before-school club.



- The headteacher has been in post since September 2014.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed a range of lessons or parts of lessons. Some of these observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspectors looked at pupils' work, listened to pupils read and talked with pupils about learning, behaviour and safety.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, representatives of the governing body, and representatives from the diocese and the local authority.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documentation relating to pupils' attainment and progress and to school management, self-evaluation information, minutes of governing body meetings and arrangements to ensure that pupils are kept safe.
- The inspectors spoke with parents and staff and took account of the 27 responses to the online parent questionnaire, Parent View.
- The inspectors took account of the 20 responses to the staff questionnaire. There were no responses to the pupil questionnaire.

## Inspection team

John Daley, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Gill Burrow

Ofsted Inspector

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