

The Holy Family Catholic Primary School

Bicknor Road, Park Wood, Maidstone, Kent ME15 9PS

Inspection dates

9–10 May 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	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Teaching is not consistently good throughout the school. Where teaching is less strong, pupils lose interest in their work because it is too easy or too hard.
- Too many pupils are working below the standard expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Too few pupils, especially the least able, make enough progress to raise their attainment rapidly.
- Few pupils reach the highest levels in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave Year 6 because work is not consistently challenging enough, especially for the most able pupils.
- Pupils do not have the opportunity to learn in sufficient depth in all subjects, which inhibits the progress that they make.
- Leaders have not ensured that the performance of staff is managed well enough to effectively improve the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- Middle leaders have not yet had an impact on school improvement because many initiatives are too new to show that they are making a difference.
- Despite leaders' efforts, attendance remains below the national average.

The school has the following strengths

- The acting headteacher and governors know what needs to be done to improve the school. They have high expectations of teachers and pupils. They have brought about some improvements to teaching and so pupils' progress is improving, especially in reading and mathematics.
- Children make a good start to their education in the early years because they have many opportunities to develop their skills across all areas of learning.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and British values very well.
- Pupils behave well; they are polite, communicative and respectful towards each other and adults.
- Safeguarding practice is effective. It is underpinned by strong relationships and an ethos of nurture and care. The school prioritises pupils' personal well-being.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better, by:
 - sharing best practice from within the school and from across the Kent Catholic School's Partnership
 - ensuring that teachers make good use of information about pupils' progress and standards to set work that meets the needs of groups of pupils
 - making certain that teachers have high expectations of pupils and consistently challenge the most able so that more pupils reach the highest levels of attainment
 - providing middle leaders with more opportunities to positively affect the quality of teaching and learning in the areas they are responsible for.
- Raise the proportion of pupils working at the standards expected for their age in reading, mathematics and especially in writing, by:
 - increasing the numbers of pupils who make more than expected progress
 - carefully identifying interventions that have the greatest impact on securing strong progress, especially for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership so that it has a clear and sustained impact on moving the school to good, by:
 - managing the performance of teachers and support staff effectively, to ensure that it helps them improve their knowledge and skills
 - continuing to work in partnership with parents to improve pupils' attendance and to engage them fully in their children's learning journey
 - ensuring that pupils have the opportunity to learn in depth in all subjects across the curriculum.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because pupils have underachieved in the past and it is too early for very recent changes to have made a difference. The acting headteacher is new to the role. In just three weeks, she has accurately evaluated the school's strengths and weaknesses. She has grasped areas for development with commendable rapidity and set about improving them.
- Historically, leaders have not ensured that the performance management of staff has been used to raise standards across the school. Consequently, some teachers and teaching assistants do not have the skills and expertise they need to improve pupils' progress.
- Many leaders are new to their roles and because of this have not fully begun to contribute to school improvement and the strategic direction of the school. Nevertheless, with support, they are beginning to understand the school's priorities and to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes. They are encouraged to investigate new ways to support the school's aims. Currently, there is too little evidence to measure the impact of new initiatives which they have introduced.
- There is a shared vision across the school of high expectations which are communicated and understood by all staff. Staff say that leaders welcome ideas from them and enable them to fulfil their own professional aspirations, which makes them feel valued. There is a sense of equity among staff and governors that has bonded them as a united team, focused on school improvement. This is having a positive effect on raising standards and improving teaching.
- The acting headteacher has taken swift action to delegate leadership responsibility so that she is supported in her quest to raise standards. The academy trust provides effective training to leaders at all levels, including middle leaders that are responsible for subjects and phases.
- The quality of teaching still requires improvement because inconsistencies remain, despite signs of improvement. Supported by two retired headteachers, the acting headteacher has put in place a programme to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in the school. More account is being taken of pupils' progress and their work to make accurate judgements about teachers' effectiveness. Leaders are undertaking training to enhance their skills of monitoring and supporting staff who need to improve their teaching.
- Leaders have introduced a system to track and analyse pupils' outcomes against the expectations of the curriculum. Leaders and teachers use this information well to identify pupils at risk from falling behind and target support to help them to improve. This analysis would be enhanced further by ensuring that individual or groups of pupils are specifically targeted to make more than expected progress, in order to quickly eradicate gaps that have resulted from poor teaching in the past.
- The school allocates funds to support disadvantaged pupils appropriately. Leaders track the impact of interventions closely but, until recently, they have not always made certain that interventions are highly effective and improving disadvantaged pupils'

progress. The acting headteacher is already reviewing the allocation of additional funding but it is too early to see if this will generate rapid progress for these pupils.

- Effective use of the physical education and sport funding for primary schools has increased the range of sports available to pupils and contributed to improving pupils' behaviour. Pupils take part in an enrichment day and experience a range of activities, such as circus skills and skateboarding. Additionally, pupils learn about healthy living through their participation in 'Change 4 Life' lunchtimes.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) knows the strengths of the school's work to support pupils and where there could be improvements. Supported by the acting headteacher, the SENCo is about to embark on a review of the special educational needs register and evaluate the impact of interventions on pupils' progress to make certain that they are making a difference.
- The acting headteacher and governors know that the curriculum requires review because pupils are not learning in sufficient depth in all subjects to prepare them well for secondary school. In spite of this, pupils' learning is enriched through a range of additional activities, and topics that often begin with inspirational activities, visitors and exciting trips. Pupils unanimously enjoy learning and are proud of their work.
- Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is supported through the curriculum and is embedded within the ethos of the school. School leaders have been highly proactive in promoting British values, which have a high profile throughout the school. A recent 'Diversity Week' helped pupils to develop a deep understanding and respect of people's differences and improve their empathy for those with disabilities, for example. The school has enlisted members of the community, such as a local priest and parents, to help them improve pupils' awareness of different cultures and beliefs.
- The vast majority of parents are positive about the school. They are particularly complimentary about the school's response to any concerns they might have, the welcome they receive every day at the school gate and the adult education courses that they are able to attend at the school. They express confidence in the ability of the acting headteacher to improve the school.
- The Kent Catholic Primary Schools' Partnership has supported the school effectively. The partnership has offered high-quality support to the acting headteacher. This has included support from two retired headteachers, and a school improvement adviser who also offers governor and staff training. This has contributed significantly to the school's upward trajectory because school leaders and the partnership are working in unison to improve the school. The school also works in partnership with a group of local schools in which staff share good practice to boost standards across the school.

Governance of the school

- Governance has been strengthened since the last inspection. Governors add to the capacity of the school to improve because they are extremely experienced and knowledgeable about all aspects of education. They have the skills necessary to challenge and question school leaders in depth and to provide helpful advice and practical support to them.
- Governors share school leaders' aspirations for pupils and ensure that actions to improve the school are evaluated to make certain that progress towards improvement

is swift enough.

- Governors are available and visible to staff, parents and pupils and are mindful of the well-being of all those for whom they are responsible.
- Governors discharge their statutory duties relating to finance, including the use of government funding, safeguarding and equality effectively.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective in ensuring that pupils are safe. Staff have received relevant training, for example in relation to child sexual exploitation and radicalisation, to help them protect pupils from harm. They have a clear understanding of what action to take if they are concerned about a pupil or the behaviour of a colleague. All staff feel that pupils are safe in school and act as very good role models to pupils in their care.
- The culture in the school is one of diligence and safeguarding is given a high priority among the whole school community. Staff who work with other agencies record their work in detail and are not afraid to pursue best outcomes for vulnerable pupils.
- Pupils feel safe at school and nearly all parents agree that their children are safe and well cared for. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, particularly online. Pupils have a good understanding of what constitutes bullying, and, in particular, cyber bullying.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Over time, the quality of teaching has not been good enough. Consequently, too many pupils are working below the expected standards for their age in reading, mathematics and, in particular, writing.
- Teaching is not consistently good throughout the school, although there are signs of improvement and evidence of stronger teaching that could be shared with others. Importantly, teachers are keen to learn and improve their practice.
- Teachers have raised their expectations of pupils and are ambitious for the progress they make. They conscientiously assess pupils' progress and achievement. They work in partnership with other schools to make sure that the judgements they make about how well pupils are achieving are correct. However, teachers do not always use this information well enough to plan for pupils' next steps in learning and to make certain that work is well matched to groups of pupils' needs. The most able pupils are not constantly challenged to make sure that they make good progress. The least able pupils are sometimes confused because work is too difficult for them and they do not have the basic skills they need to draw upon.
- Nevertheless, pupils are developing resilience and perseverance in tackling tricky work and can-do attitudes are emerging. Aide-mémoires and resources are available to pupils to help them work on their own. All pupils who responded to the online survey felt that teachers help them to do their best. However, if activities are not matched well to pupils' needs, pupils become distracted and the quality of their work diminishes.

- The quality of support provided by teaching assistants is variable. In some lessons, teaching assistants are not actively engaged in helping pupils to make strong progress in their learning because they are not deployed effectively.
- Inconsistent teaching over time has resulted in gaps in pupils' mathematical understanding. Leaders have introduced a new initiative which is strengthening pupils' functional mathematical skills. Occasionally, teachers do not use information about what pupils already know and can do to make sure that progress is swift enough. In addition, pupils do not consistently have opportunities to master mathematical skills, for example by applying these to solve mathematical problems, conduct investigations and to reason. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are sometimes too low.
- Teachers provide pupils with writing frames that help them to capture their thoughts and to structure their writing. This is helping pupils to write for extended periods and to write clear sentences. Work shows that pupils are using increasingly diverse vocabulary and beginning to extend the range of punctuation they use. In some lessons, pupils are highly enthused to write because teachers provide stimulating starting points that ignite their imaginations. Pupils' writing is developing across a range of subjects, where they write persuasively or provide explanations. Sometimes, expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low, particularly for the least able pupils, which caps their attainment.
- Pupils enjoy reading and are encouraged to read often by the school's initiative 'race to 50'. Because of this, many pupils read daily at home, and the youngest pupils read every day to an adult in school. This developing love of reading is beginning to widen the range of vocabulary that pupils use in their writing.
- Early reading skills are taught very well in key stage 1 so that pupils use their phonics confidently to sound out unfamiliar words such as 'bright' and 'scare'. Pupils are encouraged to write new words containing paired letter sounds such as 'oa' in 'soap', and use these words in sentences to demonstrate that they have understood what they mean. Effective phonics teaching is helping the youngest pupils to spell accurately but older pupils' spelling is not as strong as a result of poor phonics teaching in the past.
- Where teaching is stronger, work is well-matched to pupils' ability, including the most able. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour. Teachers ask questions that deepen pupils' understanding and to assess pupils' knowledge and understanding. Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge which they impart very well to pupils. Pupils are able to draw on their previous learning and use subject-specific language confidently. As a result, pupils make sound progress because they are encouraged to apply what they know and are equipped with the skills to do so.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are given many opportunities to experience leadership roles and positions of responsibility, such as being a digital leader or a peer mediator, which they value. They

say that they are encouraged to be independent and to take on responsibility.

- During this inspection, pupils said that 'everyone cares for one another at this school'. Pupils told inspectors about their many friends, their learning partners, their responsibilities as Reception buddies and about the 'buddy bench' on the playground where they can go if they are feeling worried or alone. They know that adults will help them if they have any concerns.
- Pupils' well-being is prioritised by staff and governors. Pupils and parents are particularly complimentary about the input of the family liaison officer, who has initiated a range of ways to help both pupils and their families. For example, a group to support young carers has been established. Pupils are able to join in activities and share information about being a young carer with other pupils on a notice board. This impacts positively towards pupils improving their own welfare.
- Overall, pupils are keen to learn and want to do well. Every pupil spoken to by inspectors stated that they enjoyed school. Most pupils listen attentively, answer questions, and respect each other's views. In some lessons, pupils are utterly absorbed in learning and there is a tangible 'buzz' of excitement to find out more. In a Year 1 mathematics lesson, pupils were bursting with eagerness to ask questions that would identify the value of the coin held in the teacher's hand.
- On a few occasions, pupils become frustrated or lose interest in their work because it is too easy or too difficult for them to understand or access on their own.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- During this inspection, pupils' conduct and behaviour was very good. Routines and expectations are well established and these result in a calm and orderly environment. No incidents of disruptive behaviour were observed at break or lunchtime, or as pupils walked around the school.
- Pupils play with their friends pleasantly at breaktimes and enjoy the wide range of activities available to them. Pupils use the adventure playground safely and share apparatus with their friends. Pupils told inspectors that if problems do occur they can see the family liaison officer who will quickly 'sort things out'. Pupils say that they are encouraged to be friendly towards other pupils, to respect people from different backgrounds and to treat everyone equally.
- The school has a system for managing pupils' behaviour with appropriate rewards and sanctions, which staff implement consistently. School records indicate that incidents of bullying and use of derogatory language are rare as a result.
- The number of pupils who require additional support to manage their behaviour is small. When this is required, leaders quickly engage the support of other professionals and put suitable strategies in place to help pupils access learning.
- Leaders have been highly proactive in tackling poor attendance, working alongside other agencies to reduce the number of pupils who have too many days off school. Despite their considerable effort, attendance remains stubbornly just below the national average. Over the last two terms, efforts were hindered by many children getting chicken pox and other unforeseeable circumstances. Leaders are not

complacent and are determined to continue to improve attendance so that all pupils can make good progress and achieve the standards of which they are capable.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In 2016, the proportion of pupils that achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6 was too low. The school's improving trajectory over the previous two years had not been sustained. However, there are signs of improving standards across all key stages, but pupils' progress and attainment are still inconsistent.
- The acting headteacher, governors and the school improvement adviser have ensured that teachers have raised their expectations of what pupils can achieve. Teachers are beginning to aim higher as a result. So far this year, nearly all pupils are making at least expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics and many Year 6 pupils have made more than expected progress. However, progress is not consistently high across all year groups and in all subjects, reflecting variations in the quality of teaching. Where teaching is weaker, fewer pupils make more than expected progress to make the swift gains required to reach the expected standards for their age.
- Some of the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are not achieving as well as they should because tasks are not consistently challenging enough. As a result, too few pupils reach the highest levels of attainment by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making at least expected progress from their different starting points. The proportion of pupils who are working at the expected standard for their age is variable, depending on their ability on entry to the school. The special educational needs coordinator and all staff know pupils' needs very well and consequently, pupils' personal development is good.
- Nearly all disadvantaged pupils are making at least expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This is comparable to other pupils in the school but, as with other pupils, progress in most other subjects is less strong. Disadvantaged pupils' attainment lags behind that of their classmates and other pupils nationally. Of note, some pupils outperform their peers and some reach the highest standards. Although progress is improving, too few make enough rapid progress to diminish the difference between their achievement and that of other pupils nationally, especially in writing.
- Some interventions for pupils who need extra support are effective, but because leaders have not always systematically checked the impact of interventions, some have continued with minimal effect on these pupils' progress. This means that the least able pupils have not caught up with their classmates quickly enough.
- Children enter Reception with abilities that are generally well below those typical for their age. Leaders work closely with feeder nursery providers to improve the proportion of children who are ready for school. Children make strong progress in the early years and the proportion of children that reach a good level of development is close to, or in line with, the national average. The number of children, including those who are disadvantaged, exceeding a good level of development is increasing.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics

screening check in 2016 was too low. This year, there are signs that standards will rise to be in line with national figures once more. Most pupils who need to retake the phonics check in Year 2 will reach the standard this year. Leaders make sure that interventions carry on throughout key stage 2 for pupils who find phonics very tricky. The younger pupils in the school are using their phonics skills in their writing and to spell words that are phonically plausible. Older pupils, who have not been taught phonics well in the past, have weaker spelling skills.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years is well led. The early years leader is enthusiastic in her pursuit of high outcomes for children across all areas of learning. She has a clear understanding of what works well and what could be even better. For example, work is underway to improve the outdoor learning environment as part of a 'transformation project', so that it provides children with a highly stimulating and rich learning experience. The early years leader has involved the local community and governors in her ambitions to rejuvenate the outdoor area.
- Adults are skilled at preparing learning that captures children's imaginations and interests. Activities are very well matched to children's abilities because staff make very good use of assessment information about each child. Consequently, children are motivated and absorbed in activities that help them to make strong progress. During this inspection, children were observed carefully shaking and tapping the bottom of a bucket to make perfect sandcastles in the sand tray. They told an inspector that the sand stayed together because it was wet and that sand came from the bottom of the sea.
- Children persevere and sustain interest in activities independently and, when needed, with the guidance of adults. Adults ask children questions that engage them in dialogue and deepen their understanding, enticing them to want to find out more. Adults had created a wet, muddy rectangular area encircled by logs. Children excitedly told inspectors that they were capturing worms by tapping on the mud like birds. In addition, they had to work out how to prevent the water from escaping!
- Children are well prepared to enter Reception because early years staff liaise effectively with feeder nurseries. Children are similarly prepared well for Year 1 because transition arrangements are embedded and children have achieved well. Children across the early years demonstrate lovely attitudes towards learning and each other. Children are eloquent, eager and polite. They share resources agreeably and collaborate well with each other.
- Children begin school with reading, writing, mathematics and communication skills that are typically well below expected for children of their age. During their time in the early years, they make good progress and a large majority of them reach a good level of development as a result of good teaching. Some children exceed what is expected of them, including children who are disadvantaged, because additional funding is allocated well to support these children's achievement.
- The early years leader engages parents in their children's education. Parents are invited to attend weekly learning reviews where they have an opportunity to look at

their children's work and talk about it with them.

- Children are safe and content because their well-being and safety are a priority. The early years leader works alongside other agencies, such as speech and language therapists, to ensure that children get the best start to their education. All safeguarding procedures are robust, as they are throughout the school.

School details

Unique reference number	140980
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10032823

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	205
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Lyn Coyle
Acting headteacher	Michelle Stenning
Telephone number	01622 756778
Website	www.holyfamily.kent.sch.uk
Email address	office@holyfamily.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized Roman Catholic primary school serving an area on the outskirts of Maidstone. It is located in the residential area of Park Wood.
- The school is part of the Kent Catholic Schools' Partnership, which is a multi-academy trust made up of 23 schools.
- Since the last inspection there have been a number of changes in school leadership. The current acting headteacher commenced her role in April 2017, three weeks prior to this inspection. Prior to this, she was the deputy headteacher.
- Most pupils are White British. There are a growing number of pupils from minority ethnic groups and a small number of pupils with a first language other than English.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. At the time of this inspection there were no pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. No pupils were in receipt of higher needs funding.

- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in classes on 24 occasions. No lessons were jointly observed with senior leaders.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, middle leaders and members of staff. Inspectors also met with three representatives of the local governing body and the school improvement adviser, who is also a representative of the Kent Catholic Schools' Partnership.
- Inspectors examined a wide range of school documentation, including information relating to pupils' outcomes, the local governing body and safeguarding.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils informally at various times during the school day, during breakfast club, playtime, in the lunch hall and in lessons. Inspectors also met with a group of pupils formally to gather their views about the school. Inspectors took into account five responses made by pupils to Ofsted's online questionnaire.
- Inspectors heard pupils read.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' books, including their writing, mathematics and topic work and the early years children's learning journals.
- Inspectors were not able to observe an assembly because of the Year 6 national tests which were taking place at the time of this inspection.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the start and end of the school day. In addition, they took account of 12 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, that had been entered prior to the inspection but within the last calendar year. No parents contributed survey responses or additional comments online during the inspection.
- Inspectors took account of seven survey responses submitted by staff.
- Inspectors reviewed the checks made on staff about their suitability to work with children.
- Inspectors examined the quality of the information provided by the school on its website.

Inspection team

Abigail Birch, lead inspector

Helen Baxter

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2017