

The Divine Mercy Roman Catholic Primary School

20 Blue Moon Way, Rusholme, Manchester M14 7SH

Inspection dates

21–22 June 2017

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	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The quality of early years provision is outstanding. Children are supported well in developing positive attitudes to learning and acquire a wide range of skills. They make excellent progress in all areas of learning.
- Support provided across the school for vulnerable pupils is exemplary. Leaders understand the needs of their pupils and their families well and provide effective support. They have shown resilience and determination in ensuring that vulnerable pupils attend school regularly to maximise their progress.
- Pupils are well behaved, friendly and courteous in the classroom and as they move around the school. They interact well with each other and adults, demonstrating tolerance, respect and thoughtfulness.
- Standards of reading, writing and mathematics in all key stages have improved significantly over time. Most pupils make better progress than other pupils in primary schools across the country. As a result of secure numeracy and literacy skills, pupils are prepared well for their next stages of learning.
- Leadership of reading writing and mathematics is having a positive impact on standards. Leadership of other curriculum areas is at an early stage of development. There is no coherent plan to develop skills systematically across other areas of the curriculum.
- The quality of teaching of reading, writing and mathematics is consistently good across the school. This can be seen in pupils' good-quality, well-presented work in these areas. In other areas of the curriculum, standards are not always as high.
- Teachers expect pupils to work hard and they encourage positive attitudes. Most pupils are committed to working to the best of their ability and enjoy their learning. However, teaching does not always fully engage all pupils in their learning.
- Pupils and their parents speak highly of their school, describing it as a place where there are very positive relationships, where pupils are looked after well and expected to work hard.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership by:
 - ensuring that leaders who are less experienced in subjects other than English or mathematics are clear about how to drive forward standards in their allocated areas of learning
 - developing a coherent, consistent and progressive plan for the delivery of focused skill acquisition in subjects other than English and mathematics and embedding this through focused teaching
 - further developing the existing monitoring of reading, writing and mathematics to include all subject areas.
- Improve teaching and learning by ensuring that:
 - all learning activities are well matched to pupils' levels of ability and interest, across different subject areas, so that all pupils are fully engaged in their learning
 - pupils' work across the school demonstrates good progression in all aspects of their education, including the humanities and technical and artistic learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have addressed the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection. Information and communication technology (ICT) is now used well to support learning across the school. Greater numbers of pupils in key stage 1 are now achieving the higher levels in a range of subjects. Leaders are keen to improve further and have been developing strategies to enable most pupils to achieve the higher levels, particularly in writing. The impact of this can already be seen in pupils' writing.
- Leaders have developed a culture where everyone is expected to work hard. They set high expectations for pupils and staff by engendering a strong work ethic from pupils' very early years at the school. In key stages 1 and 2, focus has particularly been on reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leaders have a clear and accurate understanding of standards in the school in reading, writing and mathematics. Effective use is made of school assessment information to track the progress of individuals and groups of pupils. Leaders have identified groups of pupils, including pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils. They have explored potential barriers to achievement for them. They have shown dogged determination to help pupils overcome these and have been successful in most cases.
- Curriculum planning strongly facilitates the development of reading, writing and mathematical skills for pupils in key stage 1 and key stage 2. Plans for the progression of skills in humanities and technical and artistic subjects are at an early stage of development. Planning in key stage 1 and key stage 2 does facilitate the development of scientific understanding, but in some year groups the planning does not support progressive development of the pupils' learning throughout the year.
- There are robust checks carried out by leaders to evaluate the progress pupils are making in reading, writing and mathematics, and staff adapt and refine teaching strategies as a result of these checks if needed. In other areas of the curriculum, however, this rigour is not as evident and, as a result, pupils do not systematically develop the skills, knowledge and understanding they need to. Leaders accept that the established systems of school improvement now need to include foundation subjects and that newly appointed subject leaders will need the support of other experienced leaders to develop this role.
- Teaching staff are clear about their role in ensuring that pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. There is a shared sense of responsibility for the progress pupils make, which is supported well by the rigorous cycle of appraisal run by line managers for teachers and teaching assistants.
- Staff have access to a range of professional development activities, including sharing of good practice and attending training held both within the school and in other settings. Staff feel that they are well supported, including newly qualified teachers, who say that they value the support they have had from all staff.
- Leaders ensure that pupils have opportunities to enrich their learning and develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally through a variety of visits, visitors and well-

attended out-of-school clubs, including a residential trip for Year 6 pupils. Effective use is made of reward trips and events for pupils with full attendance, which pupils value. Pupils also value the opportunities they have to take part in competitive sport, as well as their physical education entitlement.

- Leaders ensure that pupils have a strong sense of equality and understand that everyone deserves to be treated well. Systems to deal with the rare instances of bullying are effective, and pupils are confident that they can raise issues with members of staff and that any matters raised would be dealt with properly. Parents agree with this view.
- British values are an integral part of the school's mission and ethos. Pupils demonstrate a clear understanding of tolerance and democracy in many aspects of daily life at school. Leaders ensure that they enjoy taking up roles of responsibility within the school to show their commitment to this.

Governance of the school

- Governors have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and use it well to hold leaders to account for agreed improvement targets.
- They have worked with leaders to monitor school improvement work carefully, ensuring that funding allocated to support disadvantaged pupils is used effectively. They are knowledgeable about outcomes for these pupils and are aware that this group of pupils achieves at least as well as other pupils nationally and, in some cases, better.
- Governors also monitor the effective use of resources to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities so that they are well supported and make good progress. Governors are clear about how sports premium funds are spent and ensure that they are spent on appropriate activities. Pupils now have access to a wider range of sports, and teachers have developed their skills in the teaching of physical education.
- The support of an external consultant is used effectively by governors for the appraisal cycle for the headteacher and for the setting of challenging targets.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are very effective. Safeguarding is a strength of the school. Staff work tirelessly, and in some instances go to extraordinary lengths, to support and to protect a large number of pupils and their families. This is especially the case for those in the most difficult circumstances.
- Staff and governors are well trained and are clear about what to do to support vulnerable pupils. There are positive relationships between staff and most parents who are in need of support.
- Policies and procedures are up to date and meet statutory requirements. Leaders ensure that new staff are engaged following safe recruitment procedures.
- Staff keep records and implement systems meticulously. Leaders liaise closely with each other and follow up issues raised with diligence. They continue to refer and re-

refer pupils to the appropriate agencies where needed until the necessary support has been received. Regular multi-agency meetings take place to ensure that information is shared appropriately.

- Effective use is made of specialist services, including a qualified counsellor on site during the school day, with whom pupils can request a meeting to discuss problems or ask questions. Pupils feel comfortable approaching staff with concerns and feel confident that staff will help them.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers and other staff demonstrate high expectations for pupils' behaviour and a strong work ethic, to which pupils respond well. Most pupils apply themselves well in learning activities and their work is usually well presented.
- Teachers make good use of assessment information to plan activities that support learning, especially in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils are given helpful feedback in these areas to support them in further development. Support and challenge is provided for the most able and disadvantaged pupils in reading, writing and mathematics, who make good progress. ICT is used well to support pupils' learning. However, when learning tasks are not well matched to pupils' ability or interests, some pupils lose focus and are not fully engaged in their learning.
- Teachers and most support staff have good subject knowledge in reading, writing, mathematics and science and are able to support their pupils well, especially those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. A small number of support staff lack the subject knowledge or skills to manage behaviour and this limits their effectiveness.
- The teaching of phonics is secure, and pupils are able to make good use of what they have learned in their reading and spelling. Pupils enjoy reading. They read confidently and are keen to talk about a wide range of books they have read.
- Homework is used well to support pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils are expected to complete this and most do. Pupils who do not are supported to enable them to complete this during lunchtimes. Parents commented that there is useful information widely available for them, including a parent group to help them support their children in progressing well and meeting expected standards.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is variable in some subjects, such as art, technology and humanities. This is evident in pupils' work, where completed tasks do not always lead to the skill or knowledge acquisition planned for that particular area of learning.
- Learning activities in other areas of the curriculum than reading, writing and mathematics for pupils in key stage 1 and key stage 2 are often used to practise and embed oracy, reading or writing skills. This usually results in good-quality pieces of written work. However, the focus on the development of other skills (for example in history, geography, design and technology) is lost and pupils' work, especially in key stage 2, does not demonstrate these skills consistently.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The emotional well-being of pupils is a high priority for leaders, as they have a clear understanding that this is one of the major barriers to learning for their pupils. Very effective use is made of high-quality additional support through trained leaders and a well-qualified counsellor. Pupils are able to request meetings with the counsellor through a 'post-box' system. Pupils reported that they value this facility highly and use it very well.
- The most vulnerable pupils are supported exceptionally well, including with free access to the breakfast club. This has a positive impact on the progress these pupils make.
- Parents and pupils say that pupils are extremely well looked after by staff at the school and there are excellent relationships between themselves and staff. Pupils enjoy coming to school and feel safe. Bullying is rare and both parents and pupils say that it is dealt with effectively when it does occur.
- Pupils confidently say that everyone has the right to be equal, and demonstrate this themselves by the respect and thoughtfulness they show towards each other and adults. Displays and resources available for pupils to use reflect the cultural diversity of pupils at the school and celebrate this.
- Pupils are very confident and self-assured and carry out a range of responsibilities willingly and diligently, including school council, eco-warriors, chaplains, prefects, 'peace-pals', digital leaders, gardeners and sports leaders. Their strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development prepares them extremely well to be active members of their communities.
- Pupils are keen to take part in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, such as breakfast club, choir, multi-skills, digital leaders, phonics, football, dodgeball, cooking, tennis, steel pans, football, rounders, gardening and Change4Life.
- Pupils have a sound understanding of safety, including e-safety, which prepares them well for later life. They take up responsibility willingly to keep themselves and others safe, a notable example being the successful work that prefects do to keep everyone safe on the stairs.
- Leaders maintain links with alternative providers and ensure that any pupils attending are tracked with the necessary rigour.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils conduct themselves very well in lessons and move around the school in a calm, orderly manner, without needing significant adult support. This is also evident at breaktimes and lunchtime when pupils play and socialise well, demonstrating a considerate awareness of each other as they play.
- Pupils display positive attitudes to learning and are proud of their work and their

school. This positive attitude is reflected in the progress they make. Most pupils show resilience in their work. However, small groups of pupils were occasionally observed across the school disengaged in learning tasks when they were not well matched to their level of ability or interests. In all classes, pupils' behaviour demonstrated a clear understanding that everyone has the right to learn and the teacher to teach.

- Pupils show respect and thoughtfulness towards each other. They work well collaboratively and share resources generously. They listen to each other's views and genuinely celebrate each other's achievements.
- There are very clear and effective systems in place to encourage good attendance and punctuality to ensure that pupils make the most of the learning opportunities available to them. Leaders are acutely aware of vulnerable groups of pupils and support these families very well, using a wide range of effective strategies to ensure that their attendance is as high as it can be. The attendance and progress of White British and Black Caribbean pupils are below average, but leaders are doing all they can to support these groups of pupils. Current school data shows that this is having a very positive impact on attendance rates.
- Parents feel that behaviour is good and have no well-founded concerns about behaviour or welfare.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils build on the good start they make in the early years foundation stage and continue to make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics as they continue into key stage 1 and key stage 2. This means that by the end of key stage 2, pupils have secure core skills in reading, writing and mathematics, which prepare them well for the next stage in their learning.
- The percentage of pupils who achieve well has increased over time, faster than the rate of pupils in primary schools across the country. Many pupils in key stage 1 and key stage 2 now exceed the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are also supported very well so that they make progress that is in line with or above national averages in all areas.
- Highly effective support for disadvantaged pupils ensures that they make rapid progress. As a result of this well-focused support, the differences between disadvantaged pupils' and other pupils' attainment and progress have been diminished significantly.
- Leaders have also ensured that the most able pupils are supported in attaining the highest standards in reading, writing and mathematics. In key stage 1, the percentage of most-able pupils achieving the higher levels in these areas has increased over time. This continues to be a focus for the school, especially in writing. The high standard of pupils' written work in Year 2 suggests that this work is already having a positive impact.
- The percentage of pupils in Year 1 that achieve the expected standard in phonics is above that of other pupils who achieve this nationally. Pupils across the school have a

secure knowledge of phonics, which they apply confidently to their reading and spelling. Pupils enjoy reading a wide range of books and can talk knowledgeably about them.

- The outcomes for pupils in other areas of the curriculum in key stage 1 and key stage 2, however, are not consistently high. Leaders accept that the same rigour needs to be applied in the progressive development of skills in the humanities and technical and artistic aspects of pupils' education that is evident in reading, writing and mathematics.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- The leadership of the early years foundation stage is outstanding. The leader is an aspirational leader with a clear vision for further developments, ensuring that children achieve the highest outcomes possible.
- There are highly effective partnerships in place with parents, Sure Start, 'THOMP' (a local cluster group) and the local authority, enabling the sharing of information and the development and sharing of best practice. The local authority uses the early years practice at the school as a model of excellence with other schools.
- The early years leader has a clear and accurate view of standards in all aspects of the curriculum and makes effective use of his secure knowledge of data to track the progress of groups and individuals from entry. He continues to track pupils as they progress into key stage 1 to inform further developments in practice in the early years foundation stage. There are rigorous monitoring and evaluation systems in place which encompass all aspects of the early years foundation stage provision.
- There is rigorous performance management and supervision of staff to ensure that the practitioners have the maximum impact on children's learning and development. Adults were observed in both the indoor and the outdoor environment supporting and challenging children through good-quality interaction.
- All welfare requirements are met and staff demonstrate the same diligence in safeguarding children that is evident in the rest of the school. Effective risk assessment takes place, enabling children to explore independently different learning opportunities and environments and to take and manage risks safely. Parents feel that their children are safe and happy at school.
- Parents are encouraged to take an active part in their child's learning. Clear advice is given on what to expect from their child at this stage of their learning and how they can help their child's progress. Parents commented that they value this information.
- The highly stimulating learning environment enables a seamless transition between Nursery and Reception Years and between the indoor and outdoor environment. A wide range of high-quality learning opportunities are offered to the children, including adult-focused and child-initiated activities, reflecting all areas of learning.
- Children demonstrate confidence and enthusiasm in their learning and move freely from one well-defined learning area to another, supported where needed by adults. Children in the Reception Year are highly motivated to complete the 'Butterfly' challenge independently, which is tailored to each child based on prior assessment. This encourages them to practise and master skills that will enable them to progress

quickly.

- The percentage of children who achieved a good level of development in 2016 was equal to national figures. This has been an improvement over time as the percentage of children achieving a good level of development has steadily risen at the school. School data suggests that the majority of children are below or well below typical levels of development when they begin in Nursery. This means that children make excellent progress in the early years as a result of the wide range of high-quality, well-planned learning opportunities delivered through focused and highly effective teaching. This includes children who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

School details

Unique reference number	135648
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	10032403

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.

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	455
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Glyn Young
Headteacher	Ann Walsh
Telephone number	0161 672 8660
Website	www.thedivinemercy.manchester.sch.uk/
Email address	head@thedivinemercy.manchester.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 September 2012

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The government minimum national standards were met in 2016 and 2015.
- One pupil attends another educational establishment on a dual-registration basis.
- The school is larger than the average primary school.
- The school is situated in an inner-city area with high levels of deprivation.
- The pupil population includes a wide mixture of ethnic backgrounds.
- There is a large number of pupils for whom English is an additional language.
- There is a high percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals.
- There is a higher-than-average percentage of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Information about this inspection

- Ten responses to Ofsted’s online parent survey (Parent View) were taken into account and any free-text comments. The school’s own parent consultation information was also considered. Account was taken of the 13 responses to the staff questionnaire and the 13 responses to the pupil questionnaire. The lead inspector held meetings with governors, which included the chair of the governing body and two other governors.
- The inspection team observed teaching and learning in all classes. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher took part in some of these visits. Pupils’ work from a range of areas of learning across the school was examined. Senior leaders took part in this work with inspectors.
- Inspectors listened to pupils reading and held discussions with groups of pupils. They also talked informally with pupils around the school, in the dining room and in the playground.
- Inspectors held discussions with members of staff, including the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher, the early years foundation stage leader, the special needs coordinator, the business manager and key stage leaders.
- The lead inspector spoke to a representative from the local authority. Telephone conversations were held with the school improvement partner and a diocesan representative.
- Inspectors examined a range of documentation. This included information about pupils’ attainment and progress, leaders’ review of current school performance, records of meetings and a report from an external consultant. Inspectors also examined safeguarding documentation and records of attendance.

Inspection team

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Clare McGarey	Ofsted Inspector

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