

Holy Souls Roman Catholic Primary School Blackburn

Wilworth Crescent, Blackburn, Lancashire BB1 8QN

Inspection dates

20–21 September 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The governors have a clear understanding of how well the school is doing. They check all aspects of leaders' work and provide a very good level of challenge.
- The headteacher provides very good leadership. She sets high standards for herself, the staff and the pupils. As a result, relationships in the school are outstanding and enhance learning.
- The rich and broad curriculum provides plenty of opportunities for pupils to enjoy learning about life beyond school. The school's work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are very courteous and thoroughly enjoy working and playing together. They show a very high level of consideration and care for each other.
- Pupils achieve well. By the time they leave Year 6, the majority have made good progress from their starting points.
- The sports leader has enabled pupils to compete successfully at a high level in many sports across the region.
- Procedures to keep pupils safe are thorough. Pupils feel safe and say that their school is a friendly place to be.
- Leaders support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities well. As a consequence, these pupils make good progress.
- Parents and staff are very positive about the school. They particularly value the strong impact that the headteacher has had.
- Teaching in English for the most able pupils, while good overall, does not always provide enough challenge to enable these pupils to reach their full potential.
- Leaders' improved systems for monitoring and assessing children's learning are not fully established in the early years or for most able pupils throughout the school.
- Outdoor provision in the early years does not provide children with the opportunities they require to learn well across the curriculum.
- Early years staff do not involve parents enough in their children's learning.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further develop provision in reading and writing for the most able pupils, by:
 - making sure leaders and managers at all levels closely monitor the quality of teaching to ensure that appropriate levels of challenge are in place for this group
 - sharpening assessment systems to monitor and improve progress for the most able pupils.
- Improve provision in the early years, by:
 - providing the same high-quality learning opportunities for children outdoors as they receive indoors
 - sharpening monitoring and assessment procedures to ensure that staff capture accurately children's outcomes
 - increasing opportunities for parents/carers to become active partners in their children's learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and her leadership team work effectively together. They have established an ambitious culture for the school. Staff and leaders have a shared commitment to providing the very best possible care and education for pupils.
- Morale is very high in the school. Staff say that they feel valued and well supported. Leaders ensure that staff share skills to develop good practice further.
- Leaders and teachers have planned the curriculum thoroughly to ensure that there are no gaps in learning. As a result, pupils enjoy a broad range of subjects which offer rich experiences to enhance pupils' academic progress and personal development.
- Pupils enjoy a broad range of extra-curricular activities. This enables them to develop skills across the wider curriculum. One pupil said that she was particularly proud of the gardening club and told an inspector all about the 'peace garden' that had been created as a tribute to an ex-member of staff.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively. Leaders employ an additional member of staff who supports disadvantaged pupils with their learning. Funding ensures that these pupils also have full access to extra-curricular activities, residential visits and music lessons. As a consequence, leaders have observed these pupils developing in confidence, building wider friendship groups and, as the pupil premium leader noted, 'developing new passion for learning'.
- The school has made good use of the advice and support provided by the local authority improvement adviser. Leaders appreciate her knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses and the positive impact her support has had on assessment, curriculum and the teaching of reading. There is a strong link between the school and the local church. The parish priest, who is also a governor, ensures that this bond remains strong and supportive. He is a positive presence in the school and as a consequence pupils' spiritual development is greatly enhanced.
- Leaders use sports funding effectively to ensure that pupils can take part in a broad range of sporting opportunities. The school is justly proud to have achieved the gold kite mark for participation in sport. This achievement is due, in no small part, to the dedicated and enthusiastic leadership of sport in the school.
- The leadership of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well informed and organised. Leaders organise support for pupils well and closely checks how effective it is. As a result of the good use of funding, current pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points. One parent noted: 'Communication between the special educational needs leaders and home was excellent and we have been involved in every decision made with regard to our son's special educational needs and pupil premium provision.'
- Leaders prepare pupils very well for life in modern Britain. Pupils enjoy opportunities to take part in the process of democracy through lessons and through voting for school councillors. British values are reflected through school displays. Links with the local church are very strong and services in school, led by the parish priest, cover the beliefs of many faiths. Visits from parents as part of 'Enterprise Week' help pupils to

understand their personal responsibilities as future citizens.

- Parents who spoke to the inspectors were wholeheartedly positive about the care their children receive. One parent noted that it was a 'fabulous school' and another that it was 'family orientated'. Parents were particularly pleased with the support their children received when they moved between the phases of their education. Transition arrangements are effective.
- Pupils informed inspectors that they love learning and were able to talk in detail about the aspects of their learning they most enjoyed. In a Year 3 classroom pupils talked animatedly about life in Anglo-Saxon Britain and were able to tell the inspector all about the favourite facts that they had learned during the lesson.
- Assessment information is used well in most areas of the school to promote further pupils' good progress. Leaders have ensured that class teachers are taking a greater role in analysing their pupils' assessments to support learning. Leaders are now aware that this needs to be developed further in the early years to ensure that children's progress is captured accurately.
- Leaders actively develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They carefully weave all aspects into the school's broader curriculum. The school's 'Pride in Our Achievements' display reminds all pupils to 'Love one another as I have loved you.' Teachers invite pupils to join a 'growing in faith' group which actively develops their spiritual awareness. Pupils enjoy raising money for a variety of charities both in Britain and abroad.

Governance of the school

- The governing body is a reflective and caring group which maintains a positive presence in the school. The chair of the governing body works tirelessly alongside the pupils to support their progress and attainment.
- Frequent visits to classrooms by governors allow them to develop a greater understanding of the impact that funding has on pupils' learning.
- Governors have participated in a broad range of training to keep pupils safe and they join other leaders when appointing new members of staff.
- Governors have a secure understanding of how performance management is used and its links to teachers' pay.
- Governors, including the chair of the governing body, bring a wealth of knowledge, expertise and commitment to the governing body. They have a clear understanding of the strengths of the school and their understanding of school performance information has allowed them to monitor and challenge performance targets.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders are meticulous in their record-keeping and recruitment checks are thorough.
- Leaders ensure that all required checks take place to make sure that the adults in the school do not pose any threat.

- Leaders, including governors, have undertaken a broad range of training to ensure that pupils remain safe.
- Case studies of the school's work show that where pupils are at risk, leaders follow policies closely. They engage well with other agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils are safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. This is because staff provide pupils with interesting activities which engage their interest and enable them to make good progress across the curriculum. The warm, enthusiastic and supportive nature of staff encourages pupils to 'have a go' when approaching challenges in the classroom. One pupil noted: 'All our teachers are very nice and as you get older it gets harder and more challenging.'
- Teachers ask effective questions in lessons. Pupils in return give well-thought-out answers that deepen their learning and understanding.
- Overall, the teaching of reading and writing is good. Teachers encourage pupils to write for many different purposes and in different styles. However, tasks provided for the most able pupils do not always provide enough challenge for them.
- Pupils enjoy the way that teachers organise their work into topics because they are able to make strong connections between subjects. For example, in one lesson on a fictional story pupils were able to highlight learning in geography and history.
- Teachers use assessment information well to support most pupils. At times, however, information is not used effectively to provide a high level of challenge in reading and writing for the most able pupils.
- The teaching of music is a strength of the school. Pupils enjoy a range of opportunities to develop their appreciation of the subject, including an after-school choir club. Each week pupils take part in hymn practice and in Year 4 all pupils learn to play the violin. Year 3 pupils are undertaking a singing project which will culminate in a performance alongside other schools in the locality. As one pupil excitedly told the inspector, 'We love to sing!'
- In response to training undertaken, teachers have developed the ways in which they approach the teaching of reading. Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy reading and are very excited about the new 'challenging books' that their teachers have purchased for them. Leaders are currently creating a school library and a 'reading café' to support pupils with their reading development.
- Staff teach physical education and sport effectively and assessment is used well to track pupils' development of skills. Pupils enjoy a broad range of sporting activities during the school day.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work as a strong team. Teaching assistants effectively support individuals and small groups. There is a strong rapport between adults and pupils which supports pupils' learning well.
- Leaders ensure that mathematics skills are taught effectively. Pupils experience a wide range of opportunities to undertake problem-solving activities. The mathematics leader

has led classroom-based training to support the development of other class teachers. This has resulted in a consistently high level of questioning in mathematics lessons. Leaders are aware that pupils' progress in solving mathematical problems is hindered by the narrow range of equipment available.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- In this caring school, staff go to very great lengths to nurture and care for their pupils. The provision of a school counsellor ensures that pupils' emotional needs are extremely well supported.
- Pupils are extremely confident and self-assured. They demonstrate excellent attitudes to learning, take pride in their work and greatly value their education. By the time pupils leave the school in Year 6, their level of progress and very strong personal development ensure that they are well prepared for the next stage in their education. Testimonials from secondary school leaders comment that 'their [pupils'] attitude and behaviour are impeccable' and that they show, 'impressive levels of maturity'.
- The school's 'Pride in Our Achievements' poster is prominent throughout the school and exemplifies the values of respect, sharing and encouragement.
- Leaders place great emphasis on the importance of the physical and mental well-being of pupils. As a consequence, pupils in key stage 2 take part eagerly in their 'run a mile a day' activity at the start of the day. One pupil told an inspector: 'Exercise is important because it helps you to learn, because it wakes you up and makes you fit and healthy.' Leaders have noted that such activities have increased pupils' resilience and self-discipline.
- Pupils have an accurate understanding of how to keep themselves safe at home, at school and online because they receive timely advice on personal safety and the use of social media.
- Leaders value pupils' views and ensure that they are given opportunities to undertake a broad range of important work such as when acting as prefects, house captains and school councillors on behalf of their peers. This enables them to work with their teachers to deal with the very rare instances of bullying or derogatory language.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Leaders are uncompromising in their drive to ensure the highest standards of behaviour both in classrooms and in the playground. As a consequence, pupils behave in an exemplary way and understand that this helps them to learn. One pupil noted: 'The other children are generous. They play with you, share ideas, share their own equipment and toys.'
- Pupils clearly understand the expectations the adults who care for them have. As a consequence, there have been no exclusions from the school. Older pupils pass on the

expectations of behaviour through a variety of roles, including prefects and play leaders. A 'school buddy' system is in place to enable the oldest children to help to care for the youngest.

- Leaders encourage pupils to arrive at school promptly. A range of successful initiatives are in place to ensure that as few days as possible are missed from school. In 2015/16 Leaders acted swiftly to address a decline in attendance by disadvantaged pupils. As a result, the school's most recent overall attendance data is above the national average for 2016, including for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and respond positively to guidance from teachers on the very rare occasions when they are not concentrating on their work. Their conduct in and around school is impeccable.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Overall, pupils' current attainment is similar to, and in some instances slightly above, the national average.
- A dip in progress in reading in Year 6 last year was swiftly addressed by leaders and levels have increased this year to match more closely those achieved in other subjects.
- Results in the national phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) screening check in Year 1 are consistently in line with, or above, the national average. This is due to daily good-quality teaching of phonics in classes of younger pupils. By the end of Year 2, pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, except for the most able group. Leaders are aware of this issue and are addressing it through improved assessment systems and changes to the curriculum. The school's most recent performance information shows that the most able pupils are now making greater progress in mathematics. This now needs to be matched in reading and writing.
- Support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. Teachers work effectively with teaching assistants to give focused support. As a result, they make similar progress to that of other pupils in the school.
- Pupils are making good progress in a range of subjects other than English and mathematics. Work in pupils' books demonstrates high expectations across the curriculum and pupils' strong progress. Pupils spoken to by inspectors demonstrated a high level of understanding about the topics that they were studying.
- Leaders carefully monitor the impact of additional support given to pupils and adapt it where necessary. As a consequence, these pupils make similar progress to that of all other pupils nationally.
- In 2015, pupils left the school at the end of Year 6 with average attainment. In 2016, they reached average standards in writing and mathematics, although attainment dipped in reading. Leaders acted quickly to address this drop in performance and the school's most recent data shows good progress in this area.
- Most-able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are not always challenged effectively. As a result, they do not consistently reach the higher standards of which they are capable.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Children join the Reception class from a broad range of nursery settings. Leaders are aware that they need to work more closely with these providers to ensure that they have an accurate assessment of the children's strengths and weaknesses on entry.
- The opportunities for children to learn indoors are effective and resources are used well to engage and support learning. Leaders now need to continue to develop the outdoor provision to ensure that children have access to the same variety of learning experiences as they do indoors.
- Tasks are planned carefully and there is a range of activities for children to enjoy. However, these are not sufficiently linked to the assessment of children's abilities. This means that staff in Reception and Year 1 are not currently fully confident in understanding the children's learning journeys. Governors, senior leaders and leaders in the early years are aware of this issue and plans are in place to develop further the assessment system. This will include involving parents more fully in the process.
- Relationships with parents are excellent. Parents greatly appreciate the work that staff do. However, further opportunities need to be developed to gain information from parents about their children as they enter the school. Leaders also need to explore additional ways to provide parents with further information about their children's learning and to aid them in supporting their children's learning at home.
- The quality of teaching is strong and there is a very positive rapport between the children and the teachers and other adults who care for them. The quality of questioning and the responses drawn from the children enhance learning. Performance information shows that the proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception is above the national average.
- Procedures to keep children safe are good. Staff adhere to policies and procedures and communicate them effectively to others. Parents are very positive about their experiences and feel that their children are safe and that they enjoy attending school.
- The leadership of the early years has changed recently. The headteacher and new early years leader are making improvements and are well supported by effective teaching assistants. Leaders have introduced new methods of recording children's progress and staff are working effectively with other schools to share ideas and develop further learning opportunities.
- Pupil premium funding is used well to support the needs of children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. For example, leaders have provided additional support for children with social and emotional needs. Consequently, these children make the same good progress as their peers.
- Staff provide a broad range of interesting activities which follow children's interests. As a result, the children are very interested and engaged in their learning.

School details

Unique reference number	119517
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	10032803

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	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Miss M Wells
Headteacher	Mrs D. Ellison
Telephone number	01254 249892
Website	www.holysouls.co.uk
Email address	office@holysouls.blackburn.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 February 2008

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is an average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The school has a lower-than-average proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged.
- The school has a lower-than-average proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in each year group.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 21 lessons, seven of these observations were short visits with the headteacher.
- Members of the inspection team met with pupils and heard a small number of pupils read. They looked at examples of pupils' work in their books and spoke to pupils informally about their learning.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, key stage leaders, the special educational needs leader and the pupil premium leader.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the governing body, four other governors and a representative of the local authority.
- The opinions of parents expressed in the school's own questionnaires, informal discussions with parents and a letter received by the inspectors were considered.
- Various school documents were scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation, development plans, information about managing teachers' performance, external evaluations and staff-training records. Minutes of meetings of the governing body and information about behaviour, attendance and safeguarding were also analysed.
- The lead inspector carried out a detailed scrutiny of current progress and attainment information for all groups of pupils, in line with the key lines of enquiry.

Inspection team

Gill Pritchard, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jeremy Barnes	Ofsted Inspector
Stephen Rigby	Ofsted Inspector

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