

Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School Blackburn

Lynwood Road, Blackburn, Lancashire BB2 6HQ

Inspection dates

2–3 and 24 May 2018

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	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have developed an over-optimistic view of the strength of the school, based on improving progress figures. They have been slow to recognise that standards of attainment remain too low, particularly for the most able pupils. Within the school, expectations of pupils' attainment have been unambitious for too long.
- Leaders, including governors, have not made the best use of external support. As a result, the pace of school improvement has been steady rather than swift.
- Teachers do not provide most-able pupils with work that consistently challenges them to reach the standards of which they are capable.
- Although the school provides pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum, the depth of pupils' learning in subjects such as history and science varies from class to class.
- Although there is now more stability in staffing, inconsistencies remain in the effectiveness of teaching between different year groups.
- Senior leaders and governors' lack of expertise in early years provision has meant that they have not appreciated the importance of making improvements to key aspects of the early years, such as the quality of outdoor provision.
- Outdoor provision in the early years is of a markedly lower quality than that found indoors. The lack of good-quality resources means the outdoor provision does not provide children with the rich and engaging learning activities that they need.
- The use of whole-class assessment information in the early years is not as effective as it could be. Gaps in the learning of different groups of children, such as boys and girls, are not spotted and addressed quickly enough.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders have secured some clear improvements since the last inspection. Pupils' rates of progress in key stage 2 are now broadly in line with the national average, as are levels of attendance.
- The proportion of children achieving a good level of development in the early years has risen significantly since the previous inspection.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils say that they are happy and feel safe in school. Parents agree.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - ensuring that all leaders have suitably ambitious aspirations for rates of pupils' progress and for the standards of attainment that they achieve
 - increasing senior leaders' knowledge of best practice in the early years so that they more effectively contribute to the development of this area
 - ensuring that leaders make full use of high-quality external support in order to accelerate the pace of school improvement
 - ensuring that remaining inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across the school are ironed out.
- Improve the effectiveness of teaching to raise pupils' levels of attainment by ensuring that:
 - teachers more consistently challenge the most able pupils so that they make the rapid progress of which they are capable
 - subject-specific skills and knowledge in areas other than English and mathematics are developed with greater consistency across all classes.
- Improve the quality of provision in the early years by:
 - urgently developing the outdoor provision so that it provides children with a richer learning experience
 - making better use of assessment information to identify and then address common gaps in the knowledge of individuals and groups of children
 - ensuring that gaps in the achievement of boys and girls continue to narrow.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders have succeeded in moving the school forward since the previous inspection. Rates of pupils' progress in key stage 2 have speeded up to be more in line with the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the early years has risen significantly, albeit from a very low starting point. Rates of attendance have improved and persistent absenteeism is reducing.
- Leaders have been successful in stabilising teaching after a period of turbulence. Although some pupils have had to deal with changes in class teachers this year, for most the situation has been more settled. Staff have benefited from a range of professional development opportunities, including training sessions and working with other schools. The signs are that this is having a positive effect, although, so far, not sufficient to iron out remaining inconsistencies in the quality of teaching.
- These improvements must not mask ongoing issues, particularly standards of pupils' attainment. Leaders have allowed themselves to be lulled into a false sense of security by improvements in progress figures, and so have failed to act either quickly or effectively enough to address ongoing issues with standards of attainment. They have lacked ambition in establishing high enough expectations for pupils' attainment. This is particularly true for the most able pupils.
- Leaders have accurately identified actions in the school development planning to improve the school, and have identified many of the key areas that require further development. However, there is a need for greater urgency in the pace of school improvement. Leaders' limited ambition and expectations have meant that the steady pace of improvement so far has been too readily accepted.
- Senior leaders lack the expertise to improve the quality of provision in the early years, and therefore have not been able to fully support the early years leader's efforts to improve provision and children's outcomes. This is one area in which leaders have missed opportunities to speed up the pace of improvements at Sacred Heart by utilising high-quality external support and expertise.
- The leadership of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is a current area of development. The recently appointed leader, who is the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), is undertaking a nationally recognised qualification in SEN leadership, and this is helping him to develop his skills and knowledge. Suitable plans are in place for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, and those pupils, in particular, who receive additional help because of their needs, are well supported by teaching assistants who have undertaken focused training. While the tracking of individual pupils' progress is thorough, leaders are still developing systems to identify common needs and to check more specifically on the outcome of actions taken and the support provided.
- The proportion of pupils who access the pupil premium funding is broadly similar to the

national average. Plans are in place to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, and systems are in place to check on how well this additional funding is used. Currently, funding is typically having a stronger impact on pupils' personal and social development than on their academic attainment.

- Additional funding for physical education and sport is used well to provide pupils with a broad range of sporting experiences, both in school time and through extra-curricular clubs. Many pupils have enjoyed representing the school in local sports competitions, and told inspectors how proud they were to have won a recent basketball tournament.
- The school provides pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum, which is enhanced with visits out of school, such as a trip by Year 3 to Chester as part of their work about the Romans, and a residential trip for Year 6 pupils to Coniston in the Lake District. However, there are variations in the depth of learning across the curriculum between different year groups. While pupils in some classes enjoy practical science experiments, or looking at historical artefacts, in other classes learning is more superficial and fails to develop pupils' subject-specific skills.
- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding through their Catholic curriculum, while also celebrating the many faiths and languages that exist within the school. Activities, such as fundraising for charity and a link with a school in a contrasting locality, help pupils to develop a broad understanding of the British values of appreciating and respecting the differences between people.
- Historically, relationships with the local authority have been strained. The local authority issued the school with a performance standards warning letter in February 2018 asking them to improve pupils' attainment. School leaders now have a more productive partnership with the local authority and the Diocese of Salford, focused on securing more rapid improvements for the school.

Governance of the school

- Governors are passionate for this school to do well. Since the previous inspection, a new chair of the governing body has been appointed and new governors have been recruited. In recruiting new members, governors have taken account of the skills and knowledge of current members and have sensibly targeted recruitment to fill in any identified gaps.
- Minutes of governing body meetings confirm that governors do ask the headteacher challenging questions about key areas of performance. They have, however, given too much weight to ongoing improvements in rates of pupils' progress and have not focused enough on also improving standards of attainment, particularly for the most able pupils. Governors have also not consistently ensured that leaders make the best use of external support to accelerate the pace of school improvement. This is particularly true in the early years, which is an area in which senior leaders and governors have limited expertise.
- Governors have ensured that checks are made on the impact made by much of the additional funding received by the school. For example, one governor has taken the lead in checking on the impact of the use of the pupil premium funding and has produced a detailed report of her findings for other governors.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- School leaders have been successful in creating a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Staff understand their responsibilities to keep pupils safe, and know what to do if they have concerns about a pupil's welfare. The designated lead for safeguarding has ensured that all members of staff have received up-to-date safeguarding basic awareness and 'Prevent' training to allow them to spot possible signs of radicalisation. New staff members receive a thorough induction after appointment.
- The school single central record is compliant and records of concerns are detailed. School leaders are tenacious in following up concerns, working well with parents and external agencies to ensure vulnerable pupils receive the best possible support.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Although leaders have managed to stabilise staffing so that pupils are now benefiting from greater continuity, there are still inconsistencies in the effectiveness of teaching. This is particularly evident in subjects other than English and mathematics. In some year groups, pupils are provided with a good range of activities to develop subject-specific skills and knowledge, such as carrying out practical science experiments and using historical artefacts and sources. In other classes, curriculum coverage is more superficial and teachers are much less effective in developing subject-specific skills and understanding.
- Teachers do not have consistently high enough expectations of what most-able pupils are capable of achieving. As a result, teaching for the most able pupils too often lacks challenge, meaning that this group of pupils do not make the rapid progress of which they are capable.
- Largely effective teaching of different aspects of English has secured improvements in the rate at which pupils make progress in reading and writing. Pupils enjoy tasks that teachers give them to draft, edit and plan their own writing. Phonics teaching is becoming increasingly effective, so a greater proportion of pupils develop phonics skills that help them to read and spell more accurately. Teachers encourage pupils to develop a love of reading and pupils are typically reading age-appropriate texts. However, in both key stage 1 and key stage 2, too few pupils make accelerated progress and reach the higher levels of attainment in either reading or writing.
- The teaching of mathematics has improved overall. Most teachers use questioning well to get pupils to explain their reasoning, and provide pupils with opportunities to develop their number skills and then apply these to written problems. In key stage 1, effective use is made of practical apparatus to support pupils' mathematical learning. However, there are inconsistencies between classes, and this leads to inconsistencies in the quality of pupils' learning.
- The majority of the support that pupils receive is effective in helping them to access work that they would otherwise have struggled with, or to catch up with learning different skills and knowledge. This is particularly the case where staff, typically

teaching assistants, have been able to access training to increase their own skills and knowledge. Staff who are skilled at speaking more than one language provide typically effective support for pupils who are at an early stage of learning English, including those pupils who have recently arrived from abroad.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive. They understand the importance of education in helping them to achieve their career ambitions, which include becoming doctors, teachers, accountants and engineers.
- All pupils are aware of their responsibilities. Older pupils take on a wide range of extra responsibilities, which include pupil chaplains, play leaders and school councillors. Pupils are aware of how to keep themselves safe. They say that they feel safe in school. Pupils are aware of issues in relation to staying safe in the area where they live and they have a good knowledge of how to stay safe online.
- Pupils understand bullying can take different forms, including cyber-bullying or bullying because of a person's race or religion, but say that bullying in their school seldom happens. Records of behaviour confirm that incidents of bullying and name-calling are rare.
- The school promotes well different aspects of health. For example, healthy snacks are available and pupils take part in an increasing range of sporting and physical activities, both in and after school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' attendance has improved and is now in line with the national average. Previous high rates of persistent absence have fallen and are now lower than the national average. Leaders have ensured that systems to improve attendance are robust. Good attendance is celebrated in weekly assemblies. In recognition of the number of pupils from different faiths, leaders have arranged training days and other holidays around religious festivals where possible.
- Behaviour in lessons is good, and pupils work with little disruption. Pupils say that teachers are fair in their approach, and they like the fact that clear rewards and sanctions are in place. Pupils' conduct at lunchtimes and in the dining hall is good. Pupils move around the school with care. Transitions between classes and at breaktimes are calm and orderly.
- Parents and carers who spoke with the inspectors and those who responded to the Parent View survey, were of the opinion that the behaviour of the pupils was good and that incidents of bullying were rare.

Outcomes for pupils

Require improvement

- Since the previous inspection, rates of pupils' progress by the end of key stage 2 have improved from below average to average in writing and mathematics. In reading, they have remained broadly in line with other schools nationally. Leaders are rightly pleased with this improving picture of progress.
- However, while progress has improved, pupils' standards of attainment at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 have remained consistently below average in reading, writing and mathematics. Rates of progress, though improving, are not currently rapid enough to raise standards of attainment to be more in line with national figures. For example, in key stage 2 in 2017, only in writing did more than half of the pupils reach the expected standard. In key stage 1, attainment in writing was weaker, but the majority of pupils reached the expected standard in mathematics and reading.
- The school's current assessment data, backed up by evidence in pupils' books, shows the proportion of pupils making accelerated progress is slowly improving, so more pupils are now working at the level expected for their age across the school. However, too few pupils, including those who are the most able, reach the higher levels of attainment and are working at greater depth.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in the Year 1 phonics screening check rose in 2017, but was still below the national average. This is partly because so many pupils come into school with a limited understanding of English and are still catching up in terms of their phonics skills and knowledge.
- Pupils for whom English is an additional language achieve increasingly well as they move through school. In key stage 1, their attainment is typically lower than that of other pupils. By the time that they leave key stage 2, they have typically caught up so that their attainment is closer to that of their classmates. This was the case in 2017, when in key stage 2, the attainment of pupils who have English as an additional language was better than other pupils in mathematics and broadly similar in reading and writing.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils in the school is lower than the national average, so in each year group there is typically only a handful of disadvantaged pupils. There is, therefore, a great deal of variability in outcomes for these pupils. This was evident in 2017, where the attainment of disadvantaged pupils was well below that of other pupils at the end of key stage 2, but better than other pupils in the school at the end of key stage 1.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities typically make secure progress from their different starting points when measured against their individual learning targets. This is because support for pupils with identified additional learning needs is generally effective. This is particularly the case when teaching assistants have received additional training to support a pupil with a specific need.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Children enter the early years with levels of knowledge and understanding that are below those typical for their age. Many children who come into the early years are at an early stage of learning English. Staff visit all children prior to beginning the early years and liaise with nursery settings to ensure that all information about the children is communicated, and the transition into the Reception class is as smooth as possible.
- Outcomes at the end of the early years have improved since the last inspection. A majority of children now achieve a good level of development by the time that they leave the Reception class, and so are ready for the move into Year 1. However, as a group, boys do less well than girls, and the gap in the performance of boys and girls is slowly narrowing.
- The school's own tracking information and evidence in children's books and learning journeys show that children are making secure progress from their starting points. This was particularly clear in children's writing, where most are now forming letters correctly, writing readable words and short sentences, and using their phonics knowledge to help with spelling.
- The early years leader is knowledgeable about early years practice, and has identified the areas that need to improve in order for the provision to be consistently good. Currently, she is working somewhat in isolation because senior leaders' knowledge of the early years is limited and subject leaders are not fully involved in developments in this provision. This is slowing the pace of improvement.
- The learning environment indoors is attractive and well organised. Children access a good range of activities calmly and responsibly. However, provision outdoors is of a markedly lower standard. Although staff have tried hard to develop the area, for example by providing activities for children to read and write, the resources available to them are poor. This has a negative impact on children's learning, in particular for those children who would benefit from high-quality outdoor provision.
- Teaching in the early years is largely effective. Teachers use assessment information about individual children well in order to plan for next steps in their learning. Staff have a good knowledge of phonics and so teaching in this area is effective, although children's knowledge of high-frequency words is less strong.
- Staff use assessment effectively to identify children's starting points as they come into the Reception class, and to track their learning throughout the year. However, assessment information is not used as effectively as it could be to identify common gaps in the learning of different groups of children. As a result, opportunities to adapt provision and activities to target such gaps are missed.
- Positive relationships exist between the children and staff. Children's behaviour is good because adults have established clear, consistent expectations of how they expect children to behave. Children respond well to these and the atmosphere is positive and harmonious.
- Staff care for children well and have ensured that all safeguarding and welfare requirements are met.

School details

Unique reference number	119510
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	10046506

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	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	174
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Paul Crewe
Headteacher	Mr Michael Parker
Telephone number	01254 54851
Website	www.sacredheartblackburn.co.uk
Email address	office@sacredheart.blackburn.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	5 April 2016

Information about this school

- The school is a smaller than average-sized primary school. There is one class for each year group for Reception to Year 6.
- Almost all pupils are from minority ethnic groups and high numbers of pupils from overseas join the school each year. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- There has been some instability in staffing since the previous inspection, leading to some pupils being taught by a number of different teachers. However, leaders have now stabilised the situation so that a permanent staff team is in place.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited lessons, listened to pupils read and looked at the work in pupils' books. Some observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors spoke with staff, governors and representatives of the Diocese of Salford and Blackburn and Darwen local authority. Inspectors also held meetings with the leaders responsible for the early years and the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Inspectors looked at a wider range of documentation, including pupils' performance information, school policies, minutes of governing body meetings, records of attendance and behaviour, the school's self-evaluation and school development plan.
- Inspectors took account of one email that was brought to their attention and the eight responses to the Ofsted free-text survey. There were no responses to 'Parent View', Ofsted's online questionnaire. There were no responses to the staff survey or the pupils' survey.
- Inspectors spoke with parents as they brought their children to school at the beginning of the day.
- The inspection was carried out on 2–3 May 2018 by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Ofsted Inspector. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Ofsted Inspector made an additional visit to school on 24 May 2018 to gather further evidence.

Inspection team

Neil Dixon, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Mavis Smith	Ofsted Inspector
John Donald	Her Majesty's Inspector
Michelle Beard	Ofsted Inspector

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