

Holy Family RC Primary School

Prior Street, Darlington, County Durham DL3 9EN

Inspection dates

12–13 June 2018

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	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school has improved significantly since the previous inspection. All leaders are clearly determined to eradicate anything that is second best. They share a continuing ambition to eliminate underperformance. This underpins robust and effective actions to ensure continuing improvement.
- Under the skilled leadership of the experienced interim head of school, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, the desire to provide the best possible teaching, outcomes and experiences for all pupils is tangible.
- Leaders' robust evaluation ensures that they know the school inside out. As a result, school improvement planning is extremely detailed but measurable steps are not precise enough. This means that governors are not able to thoroughly evaluate the impact of leaders' actions on pupils' outcomes.
- Children in the early years make a good start to their learning. An above-average proportion of children reach a good level of development by the time they leave the Reception class. They are well prepared to start Year 1.
- Outcomes for pupils are good. In key stages 1 and 2, current pupils are making good progress from their individual starting points. Standards of attainment are above average by the end of Year 6 in English and mathematics.
- Because of consistently good teaching, pupils learn quickly. Teachers and teaching assistants alike are skilled at supporting pupils' learning.
- Leaders' continuing actions to improve teaching even further are bearing fruit. However, further work is needed to develop pupils' reasoning skills in mathematics.
- Teachers generally match work accurately to pupils' varying abilities. On occasions, work can lack challenge, especially for the most able pupils.
- The leadership of the well-planned curriculum ensures that pupils are enthusiastic and engaged in their learning. Subject-specific skills are planned and taught. Systems to assess and track pupils' progress in these skills are not developed fully in all subjects.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are good. Their positive attitudes to learning ensure that they work hard and most are determined to produce their best work.
- Pupils are rightly proud of, and feel safe in, their attractive, recently refurbished school. However, leaders' risk assessments for outside areas do not currently cover all potential hazards for pupils.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - sharpening school improvement planning by ensuring that actions are broken into measurable steps in order to achieve clear, quantifiable outcomes so that governors can evaluate the impact of leaders' actions
 - developing and embedding systems to assess and check pupils' age-related subject-specific skills
 - ensuring that risk assessments comprehensively address all potential hazards for pupils in outdoor areas.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - ensuring that work set by teachers is always appropriately challenging, especially for the most able pupils
 - further developing pupils' skills in explaining and justifying their thinking in mathematical reasoning activities.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The experienced and skilled interim head of school has been unwavering in her mission to eradicate all aspects of underperformance and secure an excellent standard of education for pupils in this school. She has been well supported by the deputy headteacher and has demonstrated steely determination to overcome all barriers to success. In a short period of time, she has led actions which are transforming and improving the quality of teaching across the school.
- This ambition to improve all aspects of school life and excel is shared by leaders, teachers, teaching assistants, governors and leaders from the trust. Consequently, pupils are making strong progress and have a confident approach to learning. This has come not a moment too soon.
- The school improvement plan is rooted in accurate self-evaluation because leaders know the school inside out. It carefully monitors the effect of actions on improving teaching and outcomes for pupils. Although time has been taken to produce a highly detailed and lengthy document, it is not sufficiently sharp or robust. Actions are not broken into measurable steps which would enable governors to hold leaders to account more rigorously. Occasionally, expected outcomes of actions are vague and unable to be quantified.
- Systems and procedures to evaluate the quality of teaching are incisive and detailed, especially in English and mathematics. School leaders, trust members and representatives of the diocese contribute to a wide range of monitoring activities. Findings are used well to bring about further improvements, with subsequent monitoring based securely on previously identified areas to develop.
- The school's curriculum is rich and balanced. It is reviewed regularly to ensure that it meets pupils' needs and interests. Regular curriculum monitoring ensures that teachers plan and teach subject-specific skills across all areas of the curriculum. Pupils' progress against these age-related subject-specific skills is not yet assessed and tracked in some creative and foundation subjects. The school is currently working on strategies that will allow the teachers to accurately assess these skills.
- The school's curriculum is broad and balanced and delivered in a thematic approach. It is usually based upon a class book, such as a study of the First World War using 'Private Peaceful' by Michael Morpurgo. Special note is taken of pupils' needs and interests in designing whole-school topic areas to study. These have included 'Black History' month, well-known refugees, aspects of multiculturalism, other faiths and community diversity. Pupils have access to a range of extra-curricular clubs such as cookery, film, arts and crafts, 'eco warriors' and sketching.
- Leaders manage pupil premium spending effectively to provide targeted support for the very small number of disadvantaged pupils. Leaders and teachers know the needs of their pupils well. Regular progress meetings enable an in-depth analysis of any possible barriers to learning for those pupils who are at risk of falling behind, including for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders' actions are accelerating the progress made by all current pupils across the school, including disadvantaged pupils.

- Effective leadership has resulted in good-quality provision for the handful of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Their needs are identified early and their good progress, sometimes in small steps, is tracked accurately. The school supports these pupils well. This support is monitored very effectively by the leader of SEN and/or disabilities and consequently, the SEN funding is used effectively by leaders.
- The primary physical education and sport funding for schools is being used well. The sports leader has a clear understanding of the benefits of improving pupils' health and well-being through involvement in exercise and sport. Pupils are now more active and take part in the 'Monday Mile' and 'Wednesday Walk'. Participation in sports clubs has risen by 30%. Effective links are made with local sports organisations for pupils to participate in sports, for example swimming, judo and table tennis.
- The school receives targeted challenge and support from Carmel Education Trust, which has been very effective in supporting the interim head of school to drive forward improvements.

Governance of the school

- The school now benefits from a skilled, dedicated and proactive governing body. Governors have been honest about their role in the decline of the school to a position where it required improvement. This has enabled them to learn from their mistakes and develop a rigorous focus in holding leaders to account. The frequent meetings of the governors' school improvement board have been very effective in providing challenge and support to the new leadership team.
- Governors make it their business to know about the work of the school and now have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors participate in monitoring activities alongside senior leaders. They bring to the school a range of appropriate professional skills and experience. This enhances their impact on school improvement. They are rightly proud of the improvements made to the school environment and the close links with the local community. Governors are pushing forward to become even more effective. An external review is planned and additional training is to be undertaken.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders ensure that a culture of safeguarding is embedded among all staff. They are vigilant in their duty to keep pupils safe. Policies, procedures and records are of good quality, with most held in an extensive online system. Staff training is thorough and up to date. This includes child protection refresher training and training to ensure that all recruitment procedures are watertight. All adults have a clear understanding of their responsibilities for keeping children safe.
- Staff are quick to identify, report and record any concerns, no matter how small. All concerns are followed through robustly by the headteacher. Pupils' rates of attendance are above those found nationally, with very small numbers of pupils who are

persistently absent. Work is currently under way to update risk assessments to ensure that they are comprehensive and robust.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders have been successful in their continual drive to improve the quality of teaching. In 2017, improved teaching resulted in pupils reaching above-average standards in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 1, and standards which were broadly average in key stage 2. It is also reflected in the strong rates of progress current pupils are now making in each year group.
- Lessons are usually lively and interesting, capturing pupils' imagination. For example, in the Year 3 class, pupils were excited to discover the result of their recent science experiment. Most were able to correctly predict which of the three plants had absorbed the most coloured liquid, depending on whether it had been left in a warm room, in the refrigerator or at room temperature.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge to structure learning effectively. For example, pupils in the Year 4 class were able to write their own 'kenning', a poem in the form of a list to describe an animal without naming it. Pupils were offered a variety of planning tools and encouraged to use metaphors, rhyming couplets and alliteration. One pupil creatively described a crocodile as a 'river ruler'.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and stick closely to the school's behaviour policy. Relationships are good. Pupils' generally positive attitudes in lessons support their learning well. They benefit from informative and exciting displays around the classrooms, including aide-memoires displaying key information for current learning in mathematics, reading and writing.
- Work is usually pitched well according to pupils' abilities, and teachers are skilled at adapting and changing plans based on ongoing daily assessments of how well pupils grasp learning. On a few occasions, the pitch of work is not well matched to pupils' abilities, especially for the most able pupils. Sometimes, teachers are slow to move these pupils on to more challenging work.
- In mathematics, basic skills of number and mental calculation are taught and consolidated regularly. For example, pupils in Year 5 were able to successfully add and subtract fractions with different denominators. In Year 6, pupils were enthused by using, and interrogating, a body of statistical information based upon the current football World Cup. However, the reasoning skills of many pupils are not well developed. Opportunities for pupils to explain their methods or thinking or to justify and prove the accuracy of their answers are too infrequent.
- As a result of the rigorous and systematic teaching of phonics, children get off to a fast start in their reading in the early years. Adults are skilled in teaching well-structured reading lessons throughout the school, pitched well according to pupils' reading skills. Every Year 1 pupil met the expected standard in the phonics screening check in 2017. Pupils who read to an inspector were confident and fluent, reading with expression and obvious enjoyment of the text.
- Teaching assistants are an important part of the school's teaching team and are skilled at supporting pupils' learning. They display good questioning skills, have high

expectations of pupils and are aware of the needs of different groups and individuals during a lesson.

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 good and most are very keen to succeed and to produce their very best work. Pupils grow in confidence during their time in school, with most acquiring an assured and resilient approach to learning. Pupils thrive in the well-ordered and positive school environment. The recently refurbished building has boosted everyone's morale, creating a perceptibly positive attitude. Displays are of good quality and support learning well. The school works effectively to ensure that pupils' physical and emotional well-being are valued and developed.
- Pupils said that they feel extremely safe in school, a view echoed by most parents and carers through the school questionnaire and Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire. Pupils talked confidently about work they had completed on e-safety and being safe when crossing the road. The school is working hard to eliminate all potential hazards for pupils in the school grounds. Pupils show high levels of respect and care for each other, valuing their classmates' opinions and working cooperatively in lessons.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness and development are good. The promotion of cultural and religious diversity and tolerance is clearly seen through displays in shared areas. Pupils enjoyed learning about Brazil, China and countries in Africa. Their moral and social responsibility is effectively developed through a range of charity ventures they support, including the work of food banks. The school works hard to raise the aspirations of all pupils, as seen in the display on 'the sky's the limit'.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils enjoy coming to school, as can be seen in their excellent attendance. They enjoy their learning and mostly work conscientiously. Pupils were crystal clear that behaviour is good in school and that there is no bullying at all. A small number of parents disagreed that behaviour was good in school in their response to Ofsted's online questionnaire and the school's own recent questionnaire. Inspectors found no evidence that their views were justified.
- The good relationships that are nurtured ensure that pupils usually conduct themselves well in lessons and around school. Occasionally, when work lacks challenge and drive, a small minority of pupils lose concentration and become disengaged from learning. Behaviour systems encourage positive attitudes to learning. The few incidents of misbehaviour and low-level disruption in class are swiftly and deftly addressed. Most pupils are polite and have good manners, holding doors open for adults and visitors. Many respond to thanks with a polite 'you're welcome'. Playtimes are harmonious occasions where pupils play happily together. No one is left out.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In all key stages, pupils are now making consistently strong progress in English and mathematics. The vast majority of pupils in every year group are on track to reach standards expected, or above, for their age by the end of the year.
- Most children begin the Reception class with skills and knowledge expected for their age. They make good progress so that the proportion that reach a good level of development is above that found nationally.
- After a very good start to learning in the early years, pupils continue to make strong progress in Years 1 and 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. Current standards of attainment in Year 2 are on track to match those reported in 2017, which, in turn, were above average.
- Pupils make a good start in their early reading skills. In recent years, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 has been consistently above average. In 2017, it was 100% of pupils.
- Standards of attainment by the end of Year 6 in 2016 were above those found nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2017, in reading and writing they were broadly in line with national averages, although they were just below in mathematics. In 2016, pupils' rates of progress across key stage 2 were below average but they improved in 2017, especially in writing. They look set to improve further.
- Over time, the achievement of disadvantaged pupils has been broadly in line with other pupils in the school and all pupils nationally. As the proportion of disadvantaged pupils in each year group is very small, statistical comparisons are unreliable. The school is working hard to support the learning of all its pupils, including the disadvantaged pupils.
- The school is quick to identify any pupils who are at risk of falling behind. Effective leadership and high-quality provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities ensure that most of these pupils make good progress from their individual starting points. Activities are carefully matched to their individual needs and abilities and skilfully delivered, including by teaching assistants.

Early years provision

Good

- Children enjoy the good-quality learning opportunities provided to them and they learn and play happily together. They are eager to explore and investigate, they are happy to share and take turns and they display good behaviour. Children are fully engaged in all activities, both inside and outside.
- Leaders are skilled in developing areas of provision, based on accurate assessment of children's stages of development, and usually maximise learning opportunities for all. The early years leader acknowledges that further work is needed to ensure that the quality of the outdoor environment matches that found indoors.
- A significant proportion of children start in the early years with skills and knowledge which are broadly typical for their age, although starting points can be lower or higher for some. Because of careful observations, choice of activities, good teaching and

probing questioning, most children make good progress and are well prepared to start Year 1. In 2017, the proportion who reached a good level of development was above that found nationally and the proportion has gradually risen year on year since 2014.

- Adults observe children carefully and skilfully build upon their interests. They support children's learning through prompts and skilful questioning. They work alongside children during imaginative and creative play sessions. Children were keen to involve inspectors in selecting and booking a holiday in the class role-play area, the travel agency. They show persistence in learning and stick to tasks. They are skilled at directing their own learning. Children display high levels of cooperation. They are inquisitive and curious and enjoy playing and exploring together.
- Basic skills in reading, writing and number are taught very effectively. In the sessions observed, Reception children were able to accurately write simple three-letter words, using good phonics skills to write a list of objects from pictures. Another group worked with the teacher to write and post a letter. They were able to use their phonics knowledge to help them spell words correctly and could use conjunctions to write a longer sentence. Children accurately recognised patterns in numbers and colours when they were given elephants to count to 20 and beyond. Occasionally, teachers miss opportunities to stretch and challenge the most able children, such as in phonics sessions.
- The early years leader and teaching assistant share the same passion and drive to see young children thrive. The leader has a clear understanding of the strengths in the early years and has identified key areas for improvement, including the use of the school grounds and embedding transition procedures as children move into Year 1.
- The school is continually attempting to strengthen links with parents. Learning journals are regularly sent home and many parents contribute with information about out-of-school activities. Parents are invited to 'stay and make' sessions in school but the early years leader acknowledges that there is further work to undertake in working with parents.
- Safeguarding practices are highly effective. Children are taught how to manage risks from an early age, and the very effective safeguarding culture that permeates the school is equally apparent in the early years. There are no material breaches of legal welfare requirements. Children are safe and well supported.

School details

Unique reference number	139533
Local authority	Darlington
Inspection number	10042180

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	209
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Malcolm Frank
Interim Head of School	Josie Wilson
Telephone number	01325 380 821
Website	www.holyfamilyprimary.org.uk/
Email address	admin@holyfamily.darlington.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	21–22 January 2016

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school converted to academy status in April 2013 and is part of the Carmel Education Trust.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for support from the pupil premium is below average. The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is well below average.
- There is one full-time Reception class.
- The interim head of school has been in post for just under one year. A new substantive headteacher takes up post in September 2018.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in lessons, including lessons observed jointly with the interim head of school. In addition, an inspector listened to some pupils from Years 2 and 5 read. Inspectors reviewed a sample of pupils' work alongside the interim head of school.
- Inspectors held meetings with governors, the interim head of school and the deputy headteacher. They also met with other school leaders, including subject leaders and members of the teaching staff. Inspectors met the school business manager and held a meeting with a group of pupils.
- Inspectors viewed a range of documents, including information relating to pupils' achievements over time, the school's data on recent and current progress of pupils and the school's view on how well it is doing. Inspectors also reviewed the school improvement plan, documents relating to performance management and safeguarding, and records of behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors took account of the 48 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, Parent View, the 13 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 15 responses to the pupil questionnaire. In addition, responses to the school's own questionnaire from February 2018 were also analysed. The school's website was also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Phil Scott, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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