

Holy Rood Catholic Primary School

Groundwell Road, Swindon, Wiltshire SN1 2LU

Inspection dates

27–28 June 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 | Requires improvement |
| Outcomes for pupils | Requires improvement |
| Early years provision | Good |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders and governors have taken too long to secure necessary improvements. Complications arising from the expansion of the school since September 2015, including high staff turnover and recruitment, have slowed the rate of improvement.
- Leaders' evaluations are sometimes overly generous, especially in gaining an accurate view of pupils' outcomes. As a result, leaders do not intervene with sufficient rigour. This slows the progress of targeted pupils.
- Leaders' strategies to raise the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are underdeveloped. This limits the progress of identified pupils.
- Some teachers lack the knowledge to deepen pupils' reasoning and thinking skills in mathematics.
- The quality of teaching across the curriculum is too variable. Teachers' expectations of pupils are not consistently high. Consequently, some pupils, including the most able, do not make strong progress to reach the highest standards.
- The teaching of reading is not good enough. This leads to inconsistencies in pupils' ability to comprehend and infer intent or meaning in reading.
- Teachers do not adapt and respond to the pupils' different needs quickly enough. This slows the pupils' progress in lessons and over time.
- Teachers do not make best use of assessment information to support vulnerable pupils, including those with individualised learning plans.

The school has the following strengths

- Current senior leaders are starting to take the right actions to tackle weaknesses.
- Pupils' behaviour and conduct are good. They show tolerance, respect and understanding of each other's cultural and ethnic differences.
- Safeguarding is effective.
- The quality of provision in the early years is good. As a result, there has been a significant improvement in the children's outcomes in 2018.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. Consequently, results in the Year 1 phonics screening check have risen sharply in 2018.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency of teaching, learning and assessment, particularly in reading and mathematics, by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve, including the most able pupils
 - ensuring teachers use assessment to adapt and respond to the needs of different pupils in lessons
 - improving pupils' knowledge and skills for comprehension and deduction in reading
 - improving pupils' reasoning and thinking skills so that they can solve complex problems in a range of mathematical situations.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by ensuring:
 - monitoring and evaluation are keenly focused on different pupils' outcomes
 - targeted individual plans for pupils who need them have precise and measurable success criteria
 - strategies for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities are robust and sustain positive outcomes for the pupils
 - the approach to the teaching of reading is re-evaluated and developed to improve pupils' outcomes and their enjoyment of reading.

An external review of governance and of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the expansion of the school in September 2015, leaders have faced a range of complications, including high staff turnover and recruitment to key posts. These have slowed the rate of improvement. Consequently, inconsistencies persist, particularly in the quality of daily teaching. These prevent some pupils from making strong progress or reaching the standards of which they are capable.
- Leaders' evaluations of the school's effectiveness are sometimes overly generous. This provides an inaccurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, especially in relation to teaching and pupils' outcomes. As a result, leaders have not been sufficiently rigorous in checking the progress of pupils, or particular groups of pupils, to ensure they are making speedy progress.
- The leadership of some core areas remains underdeveloped, for example in mathematics. However, new leaders since September 2017 are becoming established and gaining confidence in their roles. This is starting to bring about some tangible improvements, most notably in the teaching of phonics.
- The headteacher is resolute and determined to see the school succeed. She has ensured there is now accurate and reliable assessment information to closely track the progress of pupils. However, leaders are not yet making the best use of this information to inform their actions, such as when monitoring teaching and learning.
- Leaders have established appropriate systems and activities to hold others to account. For example, staff appraisals are linked to improvement priorities, and termly meetings are held with teachers to review the progress of vulnerable pupils. As a result, leaders and teachers know which pupils they need to be targeting to catch up.
- However, leaders and teachers do not have a clear enough shared expectation of the next steps to help the most vulnerable pupils make accelerated progress. Individual plans, including 'pupil premium plans' or those for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, do not contain precise and measurable success criteria to help pupils to make rapid gains.
- Leaders can account fully for the spending of the additional SEN funding and the pupil premium grant. For example, leaders allocate funds and match individually tailored interventions and provision to each pupil. However, leaders are not robust in checking how well these are working for the pupils. There is not a clear understanding of what is working well or not. This leads to a lack of timely action and the outcomes for these pupils remaining too variable across the school.
- The newly appointed special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) since January 2018 is working closely with other leaders to start to remedying weaknesses in SEN provision. However, there is a backlog of work and priorities which has slowed the rate of improvement in this area, in particular checking and monitoring the quality of individual education plans and how well these are helping pupils with particular needs.
- During this academic year, leaders have rightly focused on improving reading. This has led to some improvements, including replenishing the book stock and refurbishing the library, which is now bright and enticing. However, the strategy to promote reading for

pleasure and raise achievement is not improving reading well enough. For example, basic weaknesses in guided reading lessons or pupils having reading books that are too hard still hold some pupils back.

- Leaders promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of the curriculum well. This reflects the school's diverse cultural background and range of ethnic groups. Leaders ensure there are activities for pupils to experience being democratic, such as through elections, to understand democracy and law. Furthermore, pupils talk eloquently about world faiths and what religion and spirituality mean to others.
- Leaders design the curriculum to take account of the different backgrounds of the pupils. For example, in the early years children are taught explicitly through 'understanding the world' as a means of overcoming some experiential deficits that some may have upon starting school. The breadth of the curriculum, including extra-curricular clubs such as sewing, choir, guitar, coding and gym, provides pupils with valuable additional experiences to support their learning. These are also directed at disadvantaged pupils, who gain essential knowledge of other life skills to support their learning and development.
- Leaders' use of the sport premium is effective. This funds expert external coaching, as well as a raft of sports clubs and activities. Leaders check that disadvantaged pupils are accessing key opportunities to support their needs. This also contributes to pupils gaining an understanding of healthy lifestyles.
- Since September 2017, school leaders and governors have worked effectively with a new external adviser. This work has highlighted key areas of weakness and provided leaders with the right challenge and support through the school development plan (SDP). This has contributed to some rapid improvements, especially since January 2018, for example in the teaching of writing.
- The new leadership team is cohesive. It shows an appetite to learn and tackle weaknesses. Leaders work effectively with others to promote a culture of trust. The overwhelming majority of pupils, parents and staff have confidence in the leadership team.

Governance of the school

- Governors are not sufficiently stringent or probing in checking pupils' outcomes. As a result, they have been too optimistic and lacked accuracy in evaluating the strengths and weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment.
- Records of governors' visits and minutes show that they ask a range of questions about the school's performance and pupils' achievement. However, visits are not always followed up to assess any improvement as a result of their involvement. Furthermore, the 'next steps' that are agreed with leaders are sometimes cumbersome or too numerous to provide the most effective strategic support and challenge.
- However, governors have got the right systems in place to hold leaders to account, including through visits, headteacher's reports and appraisals. This provides governors with useful first-hand information about the school.
- Overall, governors have a secure understanding of the general strengths and weaknesses of the school. This ensures that they have appropriate priorities in place in

the SDP, for example to improve reading. They have also been open to challenge and to further training offered through the school's external adviser.

- Governors have spent funds effectively on training staff to improve the daily phonics programme, including for disadvantaged pupils and those who speak English as an additional language (EAL). This has led to notable improvements in phonics outcomes this year.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff are well trained in all mandatory requirements for safeguarding. As a result, they have a good awareness of what to do and how to report any concerns to the designated safeguarding leads.
- Leaders take prompt and decisive action on behalf of pupils. Leaders are diligent and unrelenting in checking and following up any referrals they have made to other agencies, for example when there are concerns about pupils being at risk if they are missing from education, or seeking greater urgency from external professionals.
- Staff are not complacent, and promote a strong culture of safeguarding. This includes raising the awareness of the pupils themselves and helping them to understand potential risks, hazards or dangers around them.
- Pupils say that they feel safe. They know how to stay safe in a variety of situations, such as when working or playing online. Pupils also told an inspector that the school is '10 out of 10' for safeguarding and explained how to manage risks, such as walking to church, and road safety.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is too variable. Teachers do not support and challenge pupils well enough to make consistently good progress in different subjects and classes.
- Teachers' expectations of what the pupils are capable of achieving are not high enough. This is seen, for example, in some of the reading material provided to some pupils. Furthermore, the most able pupils are not consistently challenged, which slows their rates of progress.
- The teaching of reading, particularly in guided reading sessions, is not good enough. Activities are not well matched to pupils' different needs and abilities, including comprehension tasks. A lack of progression in lessons sometimes leads to pupils being overly passive or losing interest. Consequently, some pupils are not motivated or keen to do well in reading.
- Teachers do not use information or formative assessment well to build effectively on what pupils already know, can do and understand. For example, in mathematics sometimes pupils remain on similar work for too long before being moved onto more complex or challenging themes and concepts.
- Teachers' subject knowledge in mathematics is improving, but still remains weak. This means teachers are not always confident in knowing what the next incremental stage or step is to deepen pupils' knowledge in mathematics. This is particularly evident

when teaching pupils to solve a range of complex or multi-staged problems.

- Teachers' plans and actions for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, as well as disadvantaged pupils and/or EAL, are not consistently well targeted. Pupils' individual plans are not precise enough and lack clear milestones set against achievable but challenging targets. As a result, these vulnerable pupils make inconsistent progress. Over the previous term, however, some pupils are starting to catch up well, but this remains too variable over the longer term.
- There are some notable pockets of strength in the school. In particular, training and a determined focus are now securing some good examples of writing in English and in other subjects. Useful teaching aids and prompts ensure that pupils of different abilities know what they have to do to make their writing better.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. Teachers' well-established routines, expectations and subject knowledge are rapidly improving pupils' outcomes. A consistent approach, from the Reception Year into key stage 1, is ensuring that pupils, even those with low starting points, are catching up.
- Leaders have worked well with teachers to improve the condition of the learning environment and classrooms. Learning spaces and displays are engaging. They are used consistently well, and are a useful source of information and guidance for pupils.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have positive relationships with pupils. As a result, pupils feel comfortable to work in large or small groups, or individually with adults when they need a 'boost'. Teachers typically use other additional adults well to support with teaching and learning.
- Teachers' assessments are now accurate in reading, writing and mathematics. This enables them to work with senior leaders in identifying pupils who need to catch up. Teachers know which pupils are vulnerable to underachievement. They ensure these pupils are taken into account when planning lessons and sequences of work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Some pupils are not prepared well enough academically for the next stage of their learning or education. In particular, disadvantaged pupils and/or those who have SEN, as well as some EAL pupils, make variable progress. This means some do not do as well as their peers nationally.
- When pupils are not engaged well, their learning behaviours and their attitudes deteriorate. This results in a lack of pride or care in their work, which is not robustly addressed by teachers.
- Pupils' attendance remains below the national average. However, leaders are stringently following their policies and principles to improve attendance. This is resulting in a marked reduction in persistently high absence, which is now similar to the national average. Leaders and other staff, including the attendance officer and pastoral worker, liaise and communicate effectively with other agencies to ensure that

punctuality and attendance are checked and followed up robustly.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Leaders have used the behaviour policy effectively to improve behaviour, especially since September 2017. Recorded incidents of particularly poor behaviour have fallen considerably. This is in response to the clear and raised expectations of staff.
- Pupils are polite and well mannered. They conduct themselves well and show respect and kindness to each other. For example, they look out for others on the 'buddy benches', and are pleased to offer help and support when needed.
- Pupils feel safe and happy at school. They know what bullying is and feel this is not an issue in this school. If incidents of bullying or other anti-social behaviours occur, pupils have confidence in staff to resolve these quickly.
- Pupils are proud of their school and show tolerance of different faiths, religions and backgrounds. The school's cultural and ethnic diversity is strongly reflected in the ways that pupils work and interact with each other.
- Pupils learn about the importance of reflection and spirituality, seen, for example, in the work of pupils who lead prayers through the chaplaincy team. Pupils show a strong understanding of and empathy with others. They integrate and socialise well, which is seen through play, at lunch and in lessons.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics over time has been inconsistent. This has led to poor progress for some pupils, especially prior low- and middle-attaining pupils who need to catch up. During this academic year, most recently since January 2018, there are clear indicators that pupils are gaining ground at an improved rate.
- However, previous poor achievement is taking time to 'work through' to enable some pupils to catch up. In particular, key groups including SEN, disadvantaged and some EAL pupils are still achieving below the standards expected of them.
- Pupils in key stage 2 classes are making variable rates of progress. There are some pupils making strong progress, but this sometimes masks how some groups, including vulnerable pupils, remain stubbornly below their national counterparts. This is particularly so for disadvantaged boys who also have SEN.
- There have been recent improvements in pupils' writing outcomes, especially in their knowledge and application of spelling, punctuation and grammar. In contrast, weaknesses in pupils' fluency and problem-solving in mathematics, and in comprehension and deduction skills in reading, are still barriers to raising pupils' achievement in these subjects.
- The proportion of the most able pupils reaching the highest standard is inconsistent. For example, at the end of key stage 1 in 2018 this is likely to be below the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. However in 2017, the school exceeded

national standards for greater depth in reading.

- Pupils are benefiting from applying their knowledge and skills in a range of subjects. They are writing in a range of situations and for a variety of reasons. Communication and language development are woven through the curriculum. For example, in physical education pupils are encouraged to speak, listen and respond through following instructions and developing interpersonal skills, such as teamwork.
- Pupils in the Reception Year, as well as in Years 1 and 2, have a good knowledge of phonics. In 2018, 84% have met the standards in the Year 1 phonics screening check, which would take the school above the national average, based on 2017 results.
- Pupils apply their phonic knowledge well to be able to segment in spelling and blending to decode and read words. However, pupils lack the understanding of words and sometimes have a limited vocabulary, which can slow their wider progress in reading.
- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics (2018) at the end of key stage 1 are similar to the national average. However, in comparison to pupils' starting points, this represents typical progress.

Early years provision

Good

- Leaders, teachers and additional adults ensure children get off to a good start. Children are well prepared for key stage 1 when they leave the Reception Year.
- Staff know the needs of the children well and plan high-quality activities to target their needs. For example, teachers recognise language barriers, as well as some experiential deficits, for some children when they start school. Consequently, teachers plan activities to develop children's understanding of the world around them, as well as promoting early literacy and language skills through play, nursery rhymes and songs to accelerate their learning in these areas.
- Teachers and staff have high expectations of the children. As a result, children are effectively challenged and supported to start catching up quickly, often from very low starting points. By the end of the year, the children have started to catch up well. For example, in phonics the majority of children are able to decode words such as 'train' and 'crash', using their phonic knowledge for segmenting and blending.
- Teachers plan interesting activities that are well suited to the children's needs and interests. The indoor and outdoor learning spaces are well managed and organised to ensure that children are interested and curious about the activities. These generally hold their interest well. As a result, the children are motivated and make good progress across the curriculum, especially in communication, language and literacy.
- However, provision is weaker in mathematical development. Similarly, planning to challenge the most able children across the early years curriculum is not as strong. This leads to some variability in outcomes in terms of children exceeding the early goals in different areas of learning and/or classes.
- Leaders have worked effectively through well-targeted professional development and training during the year. This has paid dividends in improving the quality of teaching and raising achievement. As a result, in 2018 the proportion of children meeting the expected 'good level of development' has risen well, from 58% (in 2017) to 72%. This is marginally above the 2017 national average and represents good progress from the

children's starting points.

- Staff involve parents and carers in their children's education in the early years. Transition into the Reception Year is well managed through a range of activities to support the children and parents, including visits to pre-school providers to meet key workers and 'stay and play' sessions. Consequently, children settle into routines quickly to start making strong progress.
- Safeguarding in the early years is effective.
- Leaders and managers have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the early years provision. The introduction of the early years leader to the school's senior management team in September 2017 provided further impetus and raised the profile of the early years foundation stage within the school. This has subsequently contributed to tangible improvements throughout the year.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 137074 |
| Local authority | Swindon |
| Inspection number | 10048272 |

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.

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| 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 | 363 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Anne Jones |
| Headteacher | Naomi Fry |
| Telephone number | 01793 523802 |
| Website | www.holyroodcatholicprimary.co.uk |
| Email address | admin@holyroodprimary.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- Holy Rood Catholic Primary School is in the third year of its operation since becoming a primary in September 2015. Holy Rood Catholic Primary School was formed following the closure of Holy Rood Catholic Infant School and Holy Rood Catholic Junior School.
- The school is split over two sites. The Upham Road site hosts the key stage 2 classes. The Groundwell Road site is for Reception and key stage 1.
- Currently, the school runs up to Year 5. This is the final academic year that the Upham Road site will also contain pupils from Holy Cross Primary. From September 2018, the school will complete its expansion to cater for pupils from Reception to Year 6.

- There is no consideration of whether the school meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of pupils at the end of key stage 2, because there has not previously been a Year 6 cohort.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is much higher than the national average. In 2017, this was 65% compared to the national average of 21%.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, including with an education, health and care plan, is above the national average.
- Due to the expansion of the school, the number on the school's roll has risen significantly over time. This has increased from 180 in 2015 to 363 currently.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited lessons across the different year groups, including the early years, on both sites. Most of these visits were undertaken with other senior leaders. Inspectors also took the opportunity to speak to pupils about their learning and to look at the work in pupils' books.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, senior leaders, including the assistant headteachers and SENCo, teachers and support staff throughout the two days of inspection. In addition, the lead inspector spoke to representatives of the governing body, including the chair of the governing board. An inspector also met with newly qualified teachers currently working in the school.
- Inspectors talked to groups of pupils, including conducting a tour of the school with pupils to discuss the curriculum and range of activities afforded to the pupils, as well as safeguarding.
- Inspectors looked at documents provided by the school, including via the website. These documents included the school's self-evaluation and development plan, records of pupils' achievement, safeguarding records and the single central record of pre-employment checks on staff.
- In making their judgements, inspectors took into account the 44 responses to Parent View. An inspector also spoke to parents at the start of the inspection. The lead inspector also took account of the views of the 43 members of staff who responded to the staff survey.

Inspection team

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Stewart Gale, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Sandra Woodman | Ofsted Inspector |
| Jen Edwards | Ofsted Inspector |

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

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