

Inspection of Holy Family Catholic Primary School

Maltings Lane, Witham, Essex CM8 1DX

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 September 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and enjoy coming to school. They experience a broad and rich curriculum and speak enthusiastically about their learning. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

The atmosphere in school is friendly, respectful and polite. Children in the early years quickly learn the routines that help them to be successful. Pupils respond to the high expectations staff have of their learning and behaviour. Bullying is rare. Pupils feel safe. They are confident that staff will always listen and follow up any worries they may have.

Lessons are purposeful because pupils listen carefully. They consider each other's points of view and willingly share ideas. Pupils learn to be resilient to setbacks. They encourage each other to overcome challenges and to achieve their best.

Pupils learn to communicate confidently and with conviction. They know that their voice will be heard. Pupils are committed to the additional roles they have in school. They work together to make a positive difference to school life and the wider community. Consequently, they learn to be responsible and active citizens.

Parents value the school's nurturing ethos and the care and support their children receive from the team of dedicated staff.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have developed an ambitious curriculum across a broad range of subjects. They have considered carefully what pupils should learn in each subject from the early years to Year 6. Staff are knowledgeable. They are well trained to teach the curriculum that leaders have planned. Teachers plan lessons that help pupils build on what they know and can do. Staff check pupils' learning regularly to identify any misunderstandings that pupils may have. They ensure that pupils practise and secure their knowledge before moving on to new topics. Pupils achieve well in all the subjects they study.

Teachers adapt the curriculum so that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve well. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) works closely with staff, parents and with pupils to ensure that pupils with SEND receive the right support at an early stage.

Children's experience in the early years prepares them well for learning at key stage 1. They become more confident and curious as they explore new things. Developing children's spoken language and vocabulary is a priority. Opportunities to extend children's mathematical understanding are thoughtfully planned. Adults interact skilfully with children in the early years to help deepen children's thinking, speaking and play.

Leaders prioritise reading across the school. Pupils speak with interest about the books they read. The school's 'reading journey' supports pupils well to develop their enjoyment of reading at school and at home. Pupils practise reading regularly. They know this helps them to improve. Leaders have introduced a new programme to teach early reading. This programme builds on the effective phonics teaching already in place. Staff are developing their confidence to deliver the programme well. They have access to appropriate training and support. Pupils practise new sounds and revisit the sounds they have learned previously so they remember them and can apply them to new learning. Children make a prompt start to learning phonics in the early years. Staff model letter sounds clearly and accurately.

Pupils who are not confident readers receive daily support to help them to catch up quickly. In key stage 1, children read books that are closely matched to the sounds that they are learning. This helps them to practise and apply their phonics knowledge to read unfamiliar words confidently. However, this is not the case for the small number of pupils in key stage 2 who receive additional reading support. The books that are used to support these pupils are not matched closely enough to the sounds pupils are learning. This means that some pupils in key stage 2, including pupils with SEND, are not developing their confidence and fluency in reading as quickly as they could.

Leaders support pupils' personal development well. The curriculum for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and sex and relationships education (SRE) is comprehensive. Pupils benefit from wider opportunities which include sports, music, outdoor learning, and public speaking. They enjoy learning about different faiths, cultures and traditions.

Leaders recognise that parents receive a lot of information from the school. Parents find it difficult to access the information they need in a timely way because it comes through different routes, and this can be confusing.

Governors are well informed. They check on the impact of leaders' work through regular visits to the school, including through discussions with pupils and with staff.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a positive safeguarding culture. Staff receive regular training and updates. This helps to ensure that staff are confident to recognise the signs of potential abuse. Staff are vigilant and well-informed. They understand the arrangements for recording and reporting concerns. Leaders work closely with the school's pastoral team and with other agencies so that vulnerable pupils and families access the support they need.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves and others safe, including online. Governors and the trust carry out regular checks to ensure that the procedures to safeguard pupils are robust and are carried out effectively.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have introduced a new programme for the systematic teaching of synthetic phonics and early reading. Staff are developing their confidence to implement the new programme. Leaders should ensure that staff continue to receive the guidance and training they need to implement the new programme well, building on the effective practice that is already in place.
- Additional support is in place for older pupils who are not yet confident readers. However, these pupils, including pupils with SEND, are not catching up with their reading as quickly as they could. This is because the support they receive does not focus sufficiently on ensuring that pupils secure, practise and apply their phonics knowledge to decode unfamiliar words. Leaders should ensure that these pupils practise and apply their phonics knowledge regularly, using carefully chosen, decodable texts so that pupils gain confidence and fluency in their reading and catch up quickly.
- Parents receive a lot of information from the school. The number of channels that staff use to communicate with them has increased during the pandemic, so sometimes this is confusing, and information is easy to miss. Leaders should review their arrangements for communicating with parents so that parents can access the information they need quickly and efficiently.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	148111
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10212004
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	208
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Simon Fenning
Headteacher	Ann Kelliher
Website	www.holyfamilyschoolwitham.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Holy Family Catholic Primary School is part of The Rosary Trust, which consists of seven Catholic primary schools in Essex. Holy Family Catholic Primary School converted to become an academy in September 2020.
- The school is in the Diocese of Brentwood. The most recent Section 48 inspection took place in May 2018.
- There are no pupils attending alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the SENCo and members of the senior leadership team.

- The lead inspector met with the chair of governors and five members of the governing body. The lead inspector held telephone discussions with the chair of the board of trustees, and with a representative of the diocesan education service.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, computing and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Meetings were held with the leader for learning outside the classroom (including forest school) to discuss the ways in which the curriculum supports pupils' personal development. Inspectors discussed the curriculum for PSHE and RSE with the headteacher.
- Other meetings took place with the inclusion manager and SENCo, and with members of the inclusion team, to discuss the provision for pupils with SEND. Inspectors reviewed documentation, visited lessons and spoke with some pupils. They discussed the specialist training that staff receive so that they can identify and meet the needs of pupils with SEND.
- The lead inspector met with the designated leader to discuss the school's safeguarding arrangements. They looked at records of safeguarding concerns and how these are followed up. Inspectors scrutinised the single central record of pre-employment checks. They also spoke with school staff about the guidance and training they receive to support the school's safeguarding culture.
- The lead inspector met with the headteacher, office manager, and sports coach to discuss pupils' attendance. The lead inspector scrutinised records of behaviour and bullying incidents. Inspectors met with pupils to talk about their experience of school, including behaviour and bullying.
- Inspectors reviewed the documentation, school policies and information about the school's curriculum that is published on the school's website.
- Inspectors considered the 61 responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including 37 free-text comments. They also considered the 27 responses to the staff survey and the 62 responses to the pupil survey. Inspectors spoke with staff and with pupils to gather their views of the school.

Inspection team

Katherine Douglas, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Jessie Linsley	His Majesty's Inspector

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