

Inspection of a good school: The Divine Mercy Roman Catholic Primary School

20 Blue Moon Way, Rusholme, Manchester M14 7SH

Inspection dates:

13 and 14 March 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The inspector is recommending the next inspection to be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school. They arrive each day eager and ready to learn. Pupils said that they are happy and safe.

Pupils embrace and celebrate each other's cultures. They benefit from the diverse nature of the school. Pupils are respectful, welcoming, and eager to learn new things with their friends. They wear the Divine Mercy school uniform with pride.

Pupils live up to teachers' high expectations for their behaviour. Pupils know that if they have any concerns, however small, that staff will listen to them. They said that staff really care for them. On the rare occasions that bullying takes place, staff and leaders deal with it quickly and efficiently.

Teachers have high expectations of pupils' achievement. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve well in different areas of the curriculum. However, in some subjects, pupils do not deepen their understanding sufficiently well. This limits their success in some areas of the curriculum. Children in the early years build their speaking, listening and mathematical knowledge and skills well.

Pupils savour the broad range of educational trips and visits available. They enjoy visits to local places of interest, including libraries, parks and museums. Year 6 pupils look forward to their annual residential 'boot camp' experience. Members of the school's gospel choir enjoy singing in different venues, including local residential care homes.

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

After a decline in standards and weak outcomes for pupils in 2021-2022, the new leadership team and governors have improved and revitalised the Divine Mercy School. Leaders are determined to 'help pupils to grow into confident, talented and articulate young people'.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have quickly earned the confidence of governors, staff, pupils and parents and carers. Leaders have also reinvigorated the curriculum and tapped into pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes, to create a vibrant community school where pupils want to learn.

Leaders have devised a high-quality and logically organised curriculum. In each subject, they have identified precisely what they want pupils to learn and by when. However, the impact of leaders' decisive action is unknown. While pupils are currently learning well, the new curriculum has only recently been implemented. The previous curriculum did not support pupils' learning effectively. Due to this, in some subjects, pupils' knowledge and skills are not sufficiently well developed.

Typically, teachers check pupils' learning and make sure that pupils understand what is being taught. Subject leaders support teachers and establish how well the curriculum is being implemented. However, some curriculum leaders are new to post and are developing in their roles. The advice that they give to teachers to improve their practice is not as effective as it could be.

Leaders place a high priority on reading. They have developed the school library and other reading areas into vibrant places where pupils can relax and read interesting books by a diverse range of authors. Older pupils enjoy books by popular children's authors and local authors and poets.

Suitably trained staff deliver leaders' early reading and phonics curriculums well. Consequently, pupils, and children in the early years, are developing their reading fluency quickly. However, weaknesses in previous phonics teaching have left their mark. Some pupils in Years 2 and 3 are not fluent readers. Leaders are determined to help pupils to catch up to their peers. Additional support is provided to pupils who find reading difficult. This is helping pupils to develop their reading confidence.

Leaders identify pupils with SEND quickly. They work closely with staff to ensure that in phonics, mathematics and other subjects, pupils can access learning alongside their classmates in lessons. Leaders have considerable expertise in understanding pupils' specific needs. To add to this, leaders work closely with different specialist to ensure that pupils with SEND get the support that they need promptly. Due to leaders' considered approach, pupils with SEND are learning well.

Pupils, and children in the early years, enjoy learning. They listen intently in class, follow the rules closely and try their best. Typically, pupils are engaged in class. Their eagerness to learn helps to ensure that lessons are usually unhindered by disruption.

Leaders have created an exciting range of activities and opportunities to support pupils' wider development. Pupils enjoy meeting local poets and learning alongside resident artists. They develop their talents and enhance their leadership skills in different ways. Pupils take pleasure in participating in different clubs, including cooking, archery, volleyball, football and gardening. Pupils take their roles seriously as members of the school council. As members of the eco-team, pupils organise litter picking events in the community. Pupils are thoughtful and caring. They raise money for different charities and support a school in Kenya. Pupils learn about mindfulness. They told the inspector that they enjoy the calm of the sensory room. Pupils understand the importance of regular exercise and healthy eating.

Staff are exceptionally positive about the school. They are proud to be part of the process of 'moving the school forward'. Pupils told the inspector that leaders are mindful of their well-being. They are not burdened with unnecessary work.

Governors know precisely what the school needs to do to further improve. They are working with leaders to improve the quality of education and to enhance pupils' personal development. Parents and carers feel fully involved in the life of the school. They told the inspector that their children are happy and progressing well with their learning.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that comprehensive safeguarding measures are in place. They make certain that all staff are familiar with the school's safeguarding policies and procedures, as well as current government guidelines on keeping pupils safe in education.

Staff understand their responsibilities. They are skilled at spotting potential signs of abuse and/or neglect. If staff are worried about a pupil, they record and report their concerns swiftly. Leaders work closely with different external specialists, to make sure that vulnerable pupils get the support they need.

Pupils learn about the potential dangers of using the internet and electronic devices through the computing curriculum.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Currently, pupils are learning well. However, until recently, the curriculum was not logically ordered or implemented consistently well. Due to this, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge and skills, and others lack depth of understanding. Leaders should closely monitor the implementation of the new curriculum and ensure that pupils get the support that they need to catch up to their peers.
- A high proportion of pupils was not secure at the national phonics reading check in 2022. In addition, pupils' progress in reading at the end of Year 6 was below average.

Leaders have raised the profile of reading across the school. Phonics is now taught consistently well. However, some pupils in key stage 1 and Year 3 are not reading fluently. Leaders should hasten the support available to these pupils and ensure that the phonics curriculum is implemented well.

- In some areas of the curriculum, subject leaders are new and are developing in their roles. Consequently, the support that they give to teachers to help them to implement the curriculum is not as effective as it should be. Leaders should ensure that subject leaders get the support that they need to help teachers to implement the curriculum more effectively.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good September 2017.

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	135648
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	10240680
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	471
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Eileen O'Sullivan
Headteacher	Clare Campbell
Website	www.thedivinemercy.manchester.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 June 2017

Information about this school

- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision.
- Several new members of staff, including the headteacher and the deputy headteacher, have been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The school is a voluntary-aided Roman Catholic school. The last section 48 inspection was carried out on 1 March 2016. Leaders are in discussion with the Diocese of Salford to arrange the school's next section 48 inspection.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and assistant headteachers. He also held meetings with other leaders, including those responsible for SEND, attendance and pupils' behaviour, welfare and personal development.

- The inspector met with members of the governing body. He held two telephone conversations, one with a representative from the local authority and the other with a representative from the Salford Diocese.
- The inspector carried out deep dives into these subjects: early reading, mathematics and art. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also listened to pupils read.
- The inspector met with pupils to discuss their learning in some other subjects. He spoke with staff about their workload and well-being.
- The inspector met with parents and reviewed the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. There were no responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys to review.
- The inspector spoke to safeguarding leaders about the reporting and recording of any safeguarding incidents. He talked with pupils about their safety and welfare. The inspector examined a range of policies and documents. He also scrutinised safeguarding information, including the school's safeguarding policy.

Inspection team

Lenford White, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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