

The Holy Family Catholic Primary School

Crookhams, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire AL7 1PG

Inspection dates	13–14 January 2016
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

- Leaders, including the governing body, have high expectations. Together, they have secured rapid school improvement in both the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils since the previous inspection.
- Pupils' attainment has been rising and is above average by the end of Year 6. Pupils' progress is good across the school, with all groups doing equally well.
- Senior leaders check provision thoroughly and have a good understanding of what needs improving next. They respond quickly to provide effective support to any pupils who may be in danger of falling behind.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Teachers plan engaging tasks which enable pupils to learn effectively.
- In the early years, teachers know the children very well and plan challenging activities that capture their imaginations. As a result, children make good progress across the early learning goals.
- Pupils behave well and work hard. The school successfully supports their personal development and welfare and keeps them safe.
- Pupils are very positive about school life. They are polite and courteous and develop key values such as respect, tolerance and kindness.
- Parents are happy with the work of the school, especially the way that adults care for pupils.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' progress is slightly slower in writing than in reading because teachers do not always expect them to write frequently at length.
- Topics in history and geography are not always studied in sufficient detail.
- There are occasions when teachers do not move on the learning of the most-able pupils quickly enough.
- Many middle leaders are new to their roles and are not yet fully involved in monitoring provision.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' progress in writing by giving them more opportunities to write at length.
- Improve the depth of pupils' learning in history and geography.
- Ensure that teachers respond quickly to move learning on when the most-able pupils have already grasped a concept or have finished their work.
- Strengthen the role of the new middle leaders in monitoring provision, driving improvement and writing action plans.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Leaders have ensured good improvements in all aspects of the school's work since the previous inspection. The headteacher, ably supported by other senior leaders, has motivated staff to improve. She has raised expectations across the whole school community. As a result, pupils develop good confidence and strive to do their best.
- Developments are based on a good understanding of the main priorities. There has been a relentless and successful drive to improve teaching. Monitoring of teaching is thorough, and information gained from this is used well to set targets for improvement. Training in areas such as the teaching of spelling and grammar has helped to improve teachers' skills and their subject knowledge.
- Leaders track the progress of pupils robustly. As a result, any pupil who is in danger of being 'left behind' is quickly identified and interventions are put in place to help them get back on track.
- Leaders have strengthened the use of the pupil premium in the last two years. Spending is closely focused on 'making a difference' both socially and academically. Consequently, the gap in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and others is closing much more quickly than in the past.
- The local authority provides effective support to the school. Advisers know the school well and have provided tailored support to help to improve the quality of teaching.
- Additional government funding for primary sport is used well. It provides additional opportunities for pupils to learn new sports such as tennis and tag rugby. Teachers are able to work alongside specialist coaches so that their skills and subject knowledge in areas such as dance are improving. Leaders monitor the impact of spending very carefully. Governors are provided with very detailed reports on pupils' participation rates to keep them informed.
- The school engages well with parents. The vast majority of parents who responded to Parent View are pleased with the education provided by the school. They especially like the caring and nurturing atmosphere in school, typically making comments such as, 'The school has been able to create a warm and welcoming environment for the children, which is key to their willingness to learn'.
- Leaders ensure that there is a strong and successful focus on teaching British values. There is a 'Value of the Month', which pupils say helps them to reflect on what is important in their lives. Staff and governors are good role models in the way that they promote values such as trust, kindness and responsibility. The result of this can be seen in pupils' respect for each other, their fairness and their tolerance and the way that they willingly raise funds for those less fortunate than themselves.
- Middle leaders in English and mathematics have played a key role in improving outcomes for pupils. They play a full part in monitoring provision and have helped to raise attainment in these subjects. Many other middle leaders are relatively new to their role. Their part in driving improvement by, for example, monitoring provision and then writing action plans for their subjects so that the school development plan can be more concise is less well established.
- The curriculum (the topics and subjects taught) meets statutory requirements. It is enriched well by clubs and visits. This contributes greatly to pupils' good enjoyment of school. Creativity is promoted well through art and music, but some subjects, especially history and geography, are not studied in sufficient detail in all classes.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governance of the school is effective because governors know the school well. They visit the school regularly and join leaders to check how well pupils are learning. This means that they have a clear picture of where teaching is stronger or weaker and how it is being improved.
 - Training has helped governors to develop their skills in analysing information on pupils' attainment and progress so that they can compare the performance of the school with that of other schools both locally and nationally. They are diligent in holding leaders to account when they see a weakness.
 - The governing body checks that systems to manage staff performance are implemented and that teachers' pay rewards good teaching.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school is diligent in keeping pupils safe. The vetting of staff is thorough and training in areas such as child protection is regularly updated. Governors are diligent in ensuring that procedures are kept up to date and are regularly reviewed. Leaders ensure that vulnerable pupils are well supported. Where needed, they liaise closely with external agencies to get additional help.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Members of staff have good relationships with the pupils and they manage their behaviour well. They help pupils develop positive attitudes towards learning by teaching them that it is 'okay to make a mistake'. This means that pupils are happy to try out new work because they know that if they are struggling the teacher will give them help.
- Work in pupils' books confirms that they make good progress in English and mathematics. Early reading skills and phonics (the sounds that letters make in words) are taught well. Consequently, pupils can break down words to help themselves read, using good knowledge of letters and the sounds they make to help them spell words.
- Adults give well-targeted support to pupils who have been identified as needing extra help, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Skilled and knowledgeable teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning both in and out of lessons.
- Teachers give pupils clear guidance about how they can improve their work. Pupils are especially positive about recent improvements to feedback in books which shows them the next steps in their learning or sets them targets.
- Parents are pleased with the quality of teaching in the school. They support teachers well by helping their children with homework and by hearing them read.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge in English and mathematics. This means that they are able to introduce new concepts with confidence. Teachers' expectations in English and mathematics are high but a recent focus on teaching basic grammar and punctuation has resulted in there being too few opportunities for pupils to write at length. This is slowing progress in writing in the current year.
- Teachers regularly check up on how well pupils are doing by, for example, asking questions or listening to discussions. They use this assessment information well most of the time to provide good challenge. However, they do not always respond quickly enough to move learning on when pupils, especially the most-able pupils, have already grasped a task or have finished their work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. There is a delightful atmosphere in lessons because pupils want to do well and they have a good understanding of how to achieve this. The school has helped older pupils to have high aspirations for their life after school, including plans to become doctors, architects or astrophysicists. As one pupil commented, 'If we work hard, we can reach the stars!'
- Nearly all parents who responded to Parent View agreed that pupils feel safe and that they are well looked after. Pupils agree that they feel safe and are taught how to stay safe. They are clear about the dangers they may face outside school. They explain confidently how to avoid problems when using the internet and are clear about some of the difficult choices they may have to make later in life.
- Pupils keenly take responsibility. Play leaders conscientiously carry out their roles at lunchtime. Pupils help each other in lessons. They are proud of the school and their work. They talk keenly to visitors and are unfailingly polite and courteous.
- Pupils understand what bullying is and they say that it is very rare. They trust adults to deal effectively with any incidents of bullying and poor behaviour. They treat each other with respect, although just occasionally when playing outside they do not think enough about how their actions may affect others.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils, staff and parents confirm that the good behaviour seen during the inspection is typical. School records confirm that incidents of poor behaviour are rare, but if they do happen they are tackled quickly.
- Adults encourage pupils to behave well through a thorough and well-understood rewards system. This system recognises those pupils whose behaviour is consistently good as well as those who need some extra help to behave well.
- Pupils are keen and enthusiastic when working. They present their work neatly and show good levels of perseverance, only occasionally losing concentration when they have finished a piece of work and are unsure what to do next.

- Attendance is broadly average. The vast majority of pupils arrive at school on time and are ready to learn. Leaders are proactive in tackling poor attendance. They are working closely with external agencies to improve the attendance of the very small number of pupils who are persistently absent.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils make good progress from their starting points across a range of subjects but especially in mathematics and English. Pupils acquire new skills and knowledge quickly and apply them well when working. They are well prepared both socially and academically for the next stage of their education.
- Improvements in teaching mean that pupils' attainment has been rising across the school. In 2015, attainment was above average in reading, writing and mathematics in national assessments at the end of Year 2 and Year 6.
- Pupils' progress is especially strong in reading. The teaching of phonics has improved and standards have risen. In 2015, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in the national phonics check for pupils in Year 1 was above the national average. By the end of Year 2 in 2015, virtually all pupils had achieved the standard expected of them. Pupils, including those who find reading more difficult, use their phonics skills confidently to break down words and to help themselves read. Pupils say they enjoy reading and they confidently read both fiction and non-fiction. The school has worked hard to create a reading culture by, for example, establishing a new library.
- In mathematics, pupils quickly develop skills across the school. By Year 6, they confidently apply their good knowledge of number to solve increasingly complex investigations.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress. Frequent checks on their progress highlight any gaps in their learning. Additional support is arranged where needed.
- There are too few disadvantaged pupils to report on their attainment, but recent improvements in the quality of support they are given mean that they now make the same good progress as others. Support is well targeted and helps disadvantaged pupils to improve their skills quickly.
- The most-able pupils usually make good progress. Teachers are conscious of their needs and plan carefully to provide the right level of challenge. Work is generally pitched at the right level, but occasionally their learning is not moved on quickly enough when they have already grasped a concept.
- Pupils' progress in writing is generally good but is slower than usual in the current year. Leaders have responded to disappointing results in spelling, punctuation and grammar tests at the end of Year 6 in 2015, when attainment was slightly below average, by increasing the focus on teaching these skills more often in literacy lessons. While this has helped to improve rapidly pupils' grammar and punctuation, it has limited opportunities for them write frequently at length in order to practise and improve further their writing.

Early years provision

is good

- Leadership and management of early years provision are good. Working together, leaders and teachers have secured rapid improvement in provision over the last two years. Teaching has improved and is now good in both the Nursery and Reception classes.
- Leaders and teachers ensure that children are happy and safe and are prepared well for the next stage of their education in Year 1. Children's attainment is rising and the proportion reaching a good level of development for their age was broadly average in 2015, reflecting good progress from their starting points.
- Adults know the children very well. Teachers plan children's learning based on their detailed observations, which help to identify what they need to teach next. All adults are quick to notice when children lose interest in an activity and they intervene at just the right time to move learning on. As a result of this, children sustain their engagement in their tasks and are keen to develop their learning further. Consequently, different groups of pupils make good progress towards the early learning goals.
- Phonics and early reading skills are taught well. Children quickly gain an understanding of the sounds that letters make and they are beginning to use these skills to attempt to spell words or write sentences. Teachers give children good opportunities to write and they make it purposeful by linking it to other topics.

- Children's personal and social development is supported especially well. They settle very quickly into life in the nursery, quickly making friends. Adults ensure this by having clear routines that children understand and are able to follow. In both the Nursery and Reception classes, children learn the importance of good behaviour. They are active and inquisitive learners who work well together and are happy to share. They keenly choose where they are going to work and show good perseverance.
- Child protection and safeguarding arrangements are thorough. There are no breaches of welfare arrangements. Adults know the children extremely well and cater for their individual needs with great care. They ensure that children are kept safe and liaise closely with parents, other providers and external agencies to tackle any problems as soon as they arise.
- Early years leaders have a good understanding of remaining priorities because they are regularly checking provision. Information on children's progress is analysed thoroughly so that weaknesses are identified and tackled quickly. This ensures that the needs of all children, including disabled children and those with special educational needs, are met well. Leaders ensure that the very small number of disadvantaged children receive early support to help them begin to catch up with their peers both in school and nationally.
- Classrooms are bright, welcoming and stimulating and support children's learning through exciting resources and experiences. Children are encouraged to explore their own ideas when, for example, ordering numbers with penguins or writing about their feelings. In the nursery, children get many opportunities to work outdoors so that they can practise and develop skills through a full range of activities. Outdoor learning is less well established in the Reception class, where there are missed opportunities to take learning outside more frequently.

School details

Unique reference number	117481
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10009150

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary-aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	220
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jenny Owen
Headteacher	Ginnette Stevens
Telephone number	01707 327419
Website	www.holyfamily.herts.sch.uk
Email address	admin@holyfamily.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	22–23 January 2014

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school with six single-age classes for Years 1 to 6. Children in the early years are taught in a Reception class and a nursery that operates in the mornings only.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is below average. This is additional government funding provided to give extra support to looked after children and those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics for pupils in Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in 19 lessons, five of which were observed jointly with the headteacher. In addition, the inspectors made some short visits to observe learning at other times.
- Discussions were held with pupils, staff, a representative from the local authority and members of the governing body.
- The inspectors took account of the views of 47 parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also talked with parents and carers at the start of the school day.
- The inspectors heard pupils read and looked at a number of documents, including: the school's own information about pupils' learning and progress; planning and monitoring documents; the school development plan; records relating to behaviour and attendance; safeguarding information; and health and safety documentation.
- The inspectors analysed responses to an inspection questionnaire from 27 members of staff.

Inspection team

Mike Capper, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Sandra Jones

Ofsted Inspector

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