

St Philip Howard Catholic Primary School

Woods Avenue, Hatfield, AL10 8NN

Inspection dates 19–20 November 2014

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Good | 2 |
| | This inspection: | Good | 2 |
| Leadership and management | | Good | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Outstanding | 1 |
| Quality of teaching | | Good | 2 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Early years provision | | Good | 2 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Clear direction and strong leadership of the headteacher, effectively supported by two assistant headteachers, are continuing to have a substantial impact on pupils' achievement.
- Teaching is consistently good and increasingly some is outstanding. Pupils achieve well from their individual starting points and as a result attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is above the national average.
- Children enjoy a good start to their education in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They learn quickly and develop confident social skills because of good teaching.
- Pupils who, for any reason, struggle with their learning are very well supported by their teachers and a highly skilled team of additional adults employed by the school.
- The excellent curriculum ensures that pupils experience a wide range of subjects, including a very strong emphasis on developing their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness.
- All aspects of pupils' safety and well-being are given the highest priority so that pupils are free to learn in a happy and stress-free environment.
- Governors are knowledgeable and active and are effective partners in supporting and challenging the school to further improve.
- Pupils are extremely polite and well-mannered and their behaviour is excellent. They listen very well to their teachers and to each other and show a high level of acceptance and care towards others.
- Relationships throughout the school are excellent and a real strength. Parents are delighted with what the school provides for their children.
- A delightful atmosphere pervades the school that contributes to pupils' good learning.
- Pupils demonstrate great pride in their school and have extremely positive attitudes to their learning. Attendance is high.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The most-able pupils are not being consistently set hard enough and sufficient work from the start of all lessons so that they reach the levels they are capable of.
- There is a lack of consistency in implementing the school's marking policy so that it is not always having the maximum impact on pupils' learning and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 24 lessons, 13 of which were seen together with the headteacher or an assistant headteacher. Inspectors observed pupils moving around the school, in the dining room, at break and lunchtimes, and in assembly. They listened to pupils read and examined work in pupils' books.
- Discussions were held with pupils, senior, middle and subjects leaders, three members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked closely at a range of documentation, including the school's data about the progress and attainment of pupils, leaders' evaluations of the school's strengths and weaknesses, improvement plans, safeguarding policies, behaviour and bullying incident logs and records relating to the management of teachers' performance.
- Inspectors took account of the 111 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View), the 25 written responses to Ofsted's free texting trial and they spoke to a number of parents.
- Inspectors took account of the 38 questionnaires completed by staff working at the school.

Inspection team

| | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| Nichola Perry, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Stephanie Fane | Additional Inspector |
| Nicholas Rudman | Additional Inspector |

Full report

Information about this school

- St Philip Howard Catholic Primary School is significantly larger than the average-size primary school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, at about one fifth, is above the national average.
- A minority of pupils come from White British backgrounds. The remainder come from a wide range of minority ethnic groups and an above-average proportion speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium funding, (additional funding given to schools for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or in the care of the local authority) in the region of one seventh, is significantly below the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The early years' provision is for Reception children who attend full time and Nursery children who attend part time.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teaching routinely challenges the most-able pupils, but particularly those in Year 1 and 2, and make sure that they are not being held back by repeating what they can already do, by:
 - setting more demanding work as a matter of course in all lessons and expecting a higher volume of work in the time allowed
 - asking more probing and extended questions which encourage pupils to really think about their responses so that they can provide more precise answers.
- Ensure more consistent implementation of the agreed policy for marking so that it has a more evident impact on pupils' learning and progress.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- As at the previous inspection, the headteacher, very ably supported by the two assistant headteachers, continues to provide a clear direction and strong leadership for the school. Governors are knowledgeable and very supportive and are an effective partner in leading the school. Relationships throughout the school community are excellent. Staff, parents and the pupils themselves are all overwhelmingly positive about the school and are fully committed to the headteacher's vision for the school.
- Rigorous procedures which check the performance of all staff are used effectively to improve and develop individual strengths. Payments which reward performance are analysed rigorously against the Teachers' Standards and against pupils' progress. Wide-ranging and frequent training opportunities are provided, either in-house or via external partners, which contribute effectively to improving the overall performance of the school and are valued highly by staff.
- Leaders at all levels are involved in whole-school improvement planning. They know the school well, understand their role and know exactly what they have to do next to secure further improvement. Less experienced leaders are being developed effectively through coaching and by shadowing more experienced colleagues.
- Senior leaders ensure that key assessments are frequently checked by partner schools or external challenge partners. Review of pupils' progress is regular and rigorous and half termly discussions with staff ensure individual inconsistencies are rapidly identified and support provided. These contribute very effectively to keeping pupils on track to maximise achievement from their starting points.
- All aspects of the excellent new curriculum set and reflect high standards which the pupils themselves talk about. Whilst placing strong emphasis on teaching English and mathematics, learning across all subjects provides high levels of both practical and investigative work, including field work. All aspects of pupils' learning show an excellent and very consistent focus on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness and development. Pupils have many opportunities to learn well about their own heritage and that of others so that they are being well-prepared for life in modern Britain.
- High value is placed on physical education (PE) through the curriculum. Imaginative use of the primary sport funding has enhanced existing provision by providing a wider range of sports and activities, including sports coaches and more activities suitable for both boys and girls. This has led to a greater involvement in competitive sports including those outside school and up to county level.
- The school places an extremely positive approach to supporting learning for all to ensure equality. Many excellent links have been established within the local and wider communities, including other schools and the church. Excellent procedures which ensure that vulnerable pupils are safe and well cared for are rigorously maintained. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- Use of additional funding, including the pupil premium funding, has enhanced already effective provision for disadvantaged pupils and those who are disabled or who have special educational needs. This means that all groups are able to achieve as well as others.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements and were found by inspectors to be effective.
- The local authority has provided an appropriate level of support for the school when it has been requested.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body continues to be an effective partner in leading the school. Governors keep their own performance under review and undertake relevant training to ensure that they remain up to date. They meet regularly and maintain close links with the senior leadership team and other leaders so that they experience at first hand the work of the school.

- Governors are very well-informed. They have good knowledge about the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement and a secure understanding of published data and what it is telling them. This, and regular reports from the headteacher, enables them to provide a high level of challenge to senior leaders about the school's performance.
- Governors are involved in the school's checking procedures and as a result they demonstrate a secure knowledge of the school's strengths and what still needs to be done to improve further. They share the headteacher's vision for the school and are fully committed to it becoming an outstanding school.
- Governors ensure that resources are spent appropriately. They are involved in decisions regarding additional sport funding and the pupil premium funding and are aware of their impact on pupils' progress and development. Governors manage the performance of the headteacher effectively. They know what actions the school takes to manage underperformance and ensure that pay and promotion are used appropriately and linked rigorously to teachers' effectiveness and pupils' progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. In all areas of the school pupils conduct themselves exceptionally well and this extends to helping each other in lessons and encouraging others to adopt the accepted approach to behaviour. Lessons are very rarely interrupted by lapses in behaviour. Adults in the school model extremely high levels of respect towards pupils and this has a powerful influence on how the pupils conduct themselves both in school and out in the community.
- Teachers and other adults rarely have to 'manage' behaviour because the focus is always on learning. Pupils are highly motivated by the activities provided and are really keen to participate and succeed. Only occasionally are staff required to manage behaviour when, for example, a pupil might struggle with a difficult situation and feel unable to cope. At such times adults extend great respect towards pupils so that they are later able to return to learning with their self-respect intact.
- Relationships throughout the school are a strength and the school provides a calm and purposeful atmosphere where pupils can learn without disruption or stress. Pupils are extremely proud of their school and love the challenge their teachers provide in lessons. They thoroughly enjoy coming to school so that attendance is high. Pupils say that they understand well how well they are performing and how to improve because their teachers keep them well-informed.
- The extremely high emphasis on developing strong social and moral values through all aspects of pupils' learning and development is reflected in their good manners, their willingness to listen to others and their exceptional tolerance towards any difference. Pupils are really quick to recognise situations where some pupils experience difficulties and are always on hand to help.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Excellent emphasis is placed on all aspects of pupils' safety and well-being from the moment they arrive in the school. This applies to the school environment and to the strong focus on helping pupils understand how to keep themselves and others safe through their learning. This ensures that pupils have an excellent understanding of risk including, for example, their personal safety when using the internet at home or at school. Pupils say they feel extremely safe in school and their parents, including those spoken to during the inspection, overwhelmingly agree.
- While pupils recognise that bullying does happen very occasionally, they are quick to add that it is likely to happen within any organisation. They understand exactly what constitutes bullying and say that they are not at all fearful of being bullied because they correctly have total faith in their teachers to protect them from this, or indeed from any other problem they may experience. Inspectors examined all schools documents regarding incidents of bullying and behaviour very closely and found that all incidents are fully and properly recorded and managed. Appropriate actions are taken to involve parents and external agencies as necessary.
- Very strong leadership of special educational needs ensures that there is excellent provision and support for pupils who experience a wide range of social, emotional, behavioural or learning difficulties and their parents. Excellent liaison with external agencies and class teachers and monitoring of pupils' academic,

social or emotional progress is maintained. This means that pupils' needs are quickly identified and managed so that disadvantaged pupils are able to achieve as well as their peers. Liaison with parents is excellent and highly valued by them.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Leaders at all levels use the school's system to regularly and rigorously check teachers' performance. This is leading to ongoing improvement which is contributing strongly to pupils' improving rate of progress across the school. The school uses its own expertise well, alongside that of a wide range of other external partners, to help others develop their practice so that the overall quality of teaching is good. Increasingly teaching is outstanding, for example, in Year 6.
- Assessment is accurate and teachers use this information about what pupils know and can do to plan activities which are carefully adapted to meet the needs of different ability groups. This is making a strong contribution to helping pupils in all ability groups to achieve well from their individual starting points.
- Learning is very well structured. Pupils are given many opportunities, in all subjects, to plan and practise examples in a timely fashion, such as, through paired or group discussion or trialling their writing. This is especially beneficial for pupils who speak little English so that they make rapid progress in their language acquisition.
- Teachers, and highly skilled additional adults, provide clear guidance and support, often using examples. Discussion and questioning are used to very good effect by support staff. This ensures that those who struggle with their learning understand what it is they have to do and helps them to reinforce their learning.
- The most-able pupils in Year 6 move on at a faster rate than others because they are routinely expected to produce a good volume of work of a consistently high standard, evident from work seen in their books. Elsewhere in the school, these pupils are sometimes held back when teachers do not recognise that they do not require the same level of input or practice as others. Some teaching requires the most-able pupils to produce more precise and well-thought-out responses. Where questioning focuses strongly on probing and challenging pupils' answers this teaches pupils very effectively to really think more deeply about what they are saying. This is not yet a routine feature in all classes.
- Pupils are clear about how well they are doing because regular and positive marking, often linked precisely to their learning, helps them understand what they need to do next in order to improve. There are increasing examples of pupils being involved in assessing their own work. However, pupils' books show a lack of consistency in application of the school's agreed marking policy.
- Pupils are encouraged to think carefully about their responses to questions. Lower-attaining pupils are given plenty of time to answer so that their self-esteem remains high. This ensures that even the most reluctant pupils are happy to try because they understand how much their contributions are valued by all adults.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Achievement in reading, writing and mathematics for pupils in all groups is good from their starting points, which are mostly typical for their age. Almost all pupils in the school reach expected levels for their age and many achieve higher than this.
- Attainment by the end of Year 6 is above average in reading and writing and well above average in mathematics. Attainment has recovered well from the significant dip in reading and, to a lesser extent, in writing in 2013. This was due to pupils catching up on earlier learning as a result of inadequate teaching in the past and a high influx of pupils with little or no English language knowledge late in Key Stage 2.
- School assessments and data indicate that progress and attainment for current pupils is set to continue at

a similar rate, including for disadvantaged pupils and those who are disabled or who have special educational needs. Lesson observations, discussions with pupils and work seen in their books confirm that progress is good in all year groups.

- Pupils are developing their reading skills well. Good improvement and development of guided reading and the teaching and application of phonics (the link between letters and the sounds they make) has led to ongoing improvement in the proportion of pupils reaching the required standard in the Year 1 phonics check. Already there is evidence of improvement in reading for current pupils.
- Recent erratic attainment by the end of Year 2 reflects inadequate teaching in the past. This led to a very significant dip in the 2014 assessments in all three subjects. Senior leaders have ensured that teaching is consistently good in Years 1 and 2 so that data the school holds, and lesson observations, confirm that pupils are now regularly making better progress and attainment is rising rapidly.
- School data, work in books and observations support good progress for the most-able across the school. Year 6 pupils make rapid progress as a result of consistently challenging activities. Consequently, more pupils are reaching Level 6 in all three subjects and the proportion exceeding expectations for their age far exceed that found nationally. Lower down the school some opportunities are missed when pupils are not expected to start more challenging activities until later in lessons so that time is wasted repeating what they can already do.
- Effective leadership has developed excellent provision and support to meet the needs of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Extremely close tracking of pupils' progress ensures that the problems and the needs for additional support are identified and support put in place so that no time is lost. This has led to pupils achieving consistently well from their individual starting points and reaching standards in line with and above those expected nationally.
- Similarly, pupils whose first language is not English, also achieve consistently well from their starting points. Excellent provision and support helps these pupils, many of whom arrive at the school at times other than the start of the year, and often with no English at all, learn at a rapid rate. They achieve at least as well as other pupils in the school and frequently better than others nationally.
- Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils vary from year to year, depending on their specific individual needs. The pupil premium funding has been used very effectively to provide focused support and additional sessions for these pupils to help close the gap between them and others in the school and nationally.
- In 2014, disadvantaged pupils ended Year 6 approximately one term behind their peers in school in reading, one term in writing, and two terms in mathematics. The gaps with other pupils nationally are less than one term in reading, and writing and mathematics. The data the school holds and lesson observations show that current eligible pupils are on track to reach at least similar standards to their classmates in all three subjects.

The early years provision

is good

- Effective leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage ensures that children get off to a good start in their learning. Children make good progress in acquiring basic skills in all areas of learning so that proportions reaching a good level of development typical for their age are increasing. Well-planned transfer arrangements ensure that learning in Year 1 builds on the good progress children make in the Reception classes, for example, as a result of more effective and systematic teaching of phonics.
- Children settle quickly and happily because adults take good account of their interests and excite their curiosity through varied and interesting activities. Adults support, encourage and challenge children well and understand when to stand back so as to allow children to develop into confident learners, able to work on their own and discover things for themselves. Adults are particularly good at helping less confident children to join in activities so that they can learn equally well.
- Robust and accurate assessment is used to plan activities which provide a good level of challenge.

Learning journals are managed well and show that children are progressing well in all areas of development. Parents are very pleased with what the school provides for their children and welcome the good level of communication they have with staff about how well their children are doing.

- Children learn in a motivating environment with access to a large and generally well-equipped outdoor area. Well-chosen resources match children's learning needs, both inside and outside so that they can learn equally well in either area. Adults set high standards and have high expectations so that children behave well and learn quickly how to co-operate with each other and share the toys and resources.

- Much attention is paid to helping children develop their often weak communication skills so that there are many planned opportunities which encourage them to talk through their play and work. The children are taught how to become good listeners and learners so that they are being well-prepared for more formal learning in Y1.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| Grade | Judgement | Description |
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 2 | Good | A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 3 | Requires improvement | A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | <p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> |

School details

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| Unique reference number | 117469 |
| Local authority | Hertfordshire |
| Inspection number | 448490 |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 376 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Christopher Day |
| Headteacher | Mairead Waugh |
| Date of previous school inspection | 20 May 2010 |
| Telephone number | 01707 263969 |
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