

Holy Family RC Primary School

Prior Street, Darlington, County Durham, DL3 9EN

Inspection dates

21–22 January 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an academy that requires improvement

- Teaching has not been consistently good enough over time to ensure that all pupils are making good enough progress, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Pupils supported through the pupil premium do not always make the accelerated progress required to move closer to the levels other pupils attain nationally.
- Some of the most-able pupils are not making the same progress as their peers. This is because they are not always challenged enough.
- Leaders have not taken robust actions to promptly improve pupils' progress rates in writing and mathematics across Key Stage 2.
- Subject leaders do not have a clear enough overview of the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' learning across the academy. They do not fully check the differences initiatives make to pupils' outcomes.
- The local governing body and multi-academy trust are committed and supportive of the academy. However, strategies the local management board has put in place have not had a discernible impact on pupils' achievement.

The academy has the following strengths

- The quality of teaching and provision in the early years is good. As a result, children make good progress from their starting points and are well prepared to start Year 1.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the academy. Pupils are polite, courteous and well mannered. They behave responsibly and are caring both within the academy and beyond in the wider community.
- Pupils are keen to be in school. Their attendance and punctuality are good.
- The teaching of reading and phonics (the sounds that letters make) is well structured. Most pupils attain at levels above those of other pupils nationally in these two areas.
- A wide range of curricular opportunities, including specialist teaching in physical education (PE) and music combined with after-school activities, enrich learning. This enhances pupils' knowledge, skills and interests.
- Effective systems, practice and training are in place to keep pupils safe.

Full report

What does the academy need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement in writing and mathematics by:
 - improving the consistency of teaching and learning and the effective use of teaching assistants
 - developing the skills of middle leaders so that they have a greater overview of whole-school improvements and can check the impact of initiatives on pupils' achievement
 - embedding the recently introduced assessment and marking systems.

- Improve progress for the most-able pupils and for disadvantaged pupils by:
 - ensuring sufficient challenge in lessons for the most able
 - leaders checking the impact of initiatives to accelerate the progress of pupils supported through the pupil premium and adapting these where necessary to maximise impact.

An external review of the academy's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement. Over time, senior leaders, including governors, have not been effective enough to ensure good teaching and pupil progress. They have not acted rigorously enough to address a lack of pupil progress in writing and mathematics.
- Leaders and governors have been overly positive in their overall judgements of the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes. While they have an analysis of the academy's pupil progress information and systems for checking the quality of teaching, they do not use this information to arrive at accurate conclusions.
- In 2015, achievement for disadvantaged pupils fell and the gap with other pupils nationally widened. Leaders and governors have taken strategic action to address this. The deputy headteacher now has a specific role of supporting teachers across the academy to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. A key governor and the headteacher have worked closely together to develop the 2015/16 pupil premium action plan. However, this plan is missing specific timescales and detailed approaches for checking its impact on pupils' outcomes.
- Subject leaders have had support to improve their leadership roles. They have introduced new initiatives to improve the quality of teaching, such as approaches to improve writing. However, opportunities for subject leaders to formally check the impact of these actions have been limited. This makes it difficult for them to judge which initiatives make a difference to pupils' outcomes.
- The deputy headteacher provides effective leadership of provision for disabled pupils and pupils with special educational needs. There are good links with other agencies and the academy provides well-thought-through learning opportunities to meet the specific needs of these pupils. As a result, they are making at least expected progress and are included well in the school community.
- Pupils enjoy a wide range of subjects through the curriculum. The academy has an effectively planned curriculum based on the National Curriculum subjects. Relevant links between subjects are made to create topics which motivate pupils' learning. Pupils benefit from specialist teaching in music and PE. They also have access to various after-school clubs which enrich the curriculum. Recently the academy has increased the curriculum time available for mathematics as part of the strategy of improving pupils' achievement in this subject.
- The additional funding for sport and PE in primary schools is used effectively to increase the opportunities pupils have to enjoy physical activities and learn from specialist coaches and teachers. This has improved teachers' skills and the quality of teaching in this subject. Opportunities for pupils to take part in competitive sports and after-school clubs have developed.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Leaders and staff have created a culture of respect and tolerance in this welcoming and friendly academy. For example, during the two days of the inspection, pupils and parents joined together in events both of reflection and celebration of pupils' achievement.
- Pupils have a good understanding of personal responsibility and have opportunities to develop their understanding of democracy. For example, any pupil can make recommendations for school improvements through the school council. Such opportunities and the academy's ethos promote pupils' understanding of British values.
- Performance management systems are in place. Leaders and governors ensure that teachers' pay progression is well linked to their performance management objectives.
- The Parent View survey and the academy's own survey of parental opinion identified that parents would like to receive more timely communications about events at the academy. Leaders have responded positively to this information and made greater use of newsletters and online communications to ensure that parents are better informed about the academy.
- **The governance of the academy**
 - Governance of the academy is provided by the local governing board with further oversight by the Carmel Education Trust. Both these groups are ambitious for the pupils attending the academy. Structured systems are in place to provide support and challenge to the academy's leaders. Governors are aware of the academy's strengths and areas for development and hold the leaders and staff to account by structured performance management systems.

- The Carmel Education Trust has provided increasing levels of school support, including the services of a school improvement officer, staff professional development and middle leadership networks. This has supported teachers with English subject knowledge and assisted with the development of new assessment and marking approaches. Leaders and teachers have responded positively to this support, for example, in the use of marking in pupils’ books and the working wall displays in classrooms to develop pupils’ writing skills. However, these developments are still at an early stage of introduction and it is too early to determine fully their impact upon pupils’ achievement.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There are strong, robust systems and practice in place. Staff and governors receive regular and appropriate training. For example, recent training has taken place on the Prevent duty to recognise the signs of radicalisation and extremism.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent, especially in writing and mathematics. As a result, over time, too few pupils make good progress in these subjects.
- Where teaching is less effective, teachers’ expectations are too low in relation to what pupils can achieve and sometimes pupils spend too much time completing work which they have already grasped. This limits the depth and breadth of learning.
- In some classes, teaching assistants are not used to have a positive enough effect upon pupils’ learning. Where teaching assistants have clear guidance of what their role in lessons is, they have a far greater impact on pupils’ engagement and learning.
- Generally teachers make effective use of practical resources to support pupils’ access to learning. On some occasions, lack of key practical resources or ineffective use of resources limits pupils’ learning.
- A new approach to marking has recently been adopted by the academy. Pupils’ books demonstrate that teachers are following this marking policy as part of their feedback. Discussions with pupils show that they understand how this new form of marking can help them to improve their work. This approach is at a very early stage of implementation and it is too early to determine whether this is making the required improvements to pupils’ progress.
- Pupils receive a range of homework to support the development of their English and mathematical skills. Some parents who responded to the online Parent View survey suggested that their child did not receive appropriate homework for their age.
- Improvements have been made to assessment arrangements. Regular assessments, better linked to the National Curriculum, have established a more accurate baseline of current pupils’ attainment to assist teachers’ planning. The academy has worked well with the other schools in the trust to develop its practice in this area. This system is also helping leaders to identify where pupils need to accelerate their progress to achieve the required expectations for their age in English and mathematics.
- Pupils receive regular teaching in phonics and reading. Where phonics teaching is carefully matched to pupils’ needs, they make good progress. There are many opportunities for pupils to read regularly in school. The academy has an attractive, well-stocked library which encourages in pupils a love of literature. As a result, pupils have well-developed reading skills across the academy.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

Personal development and welfare

- The academy’s work to promote pupils’ personal development and welfare is good.
- The development of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the academy. Opportunities to develop kind-heartedness and consideration for the needs of others are embedded in the curriculum through opportunities to support other pupils and people in the community. For example, Year 6 pupils support the younger children in Reception and Mini Vinnies are involved in activities to support people in the wider community.
- Pupils are self-confident and prepared to put forward their views in a respectful and thoughtful way. This is because they are taught how to listen carefully to the views and learning of others and to present their own view in a constructive way. For example, in one lesson Year 6 pupils worked cooperatively to develop their ideas about their feelings and emotions if they had to live without their parents.

- Pupils feel safe and valued as members of the school community. They know how to keep themselves safe, including when online. The academy's curriculum and a wide range of visits and visitors provide pupils with a good understanding of how to stay safe. Pupils, parents and staff all agree that the academy is a safe place to learn.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. In the vast majority of lessons, pupils are well behaved, keen to learn and work hard. During playtimes and lunchtimes, pupils behave well, socialise suitably and engage in lively, friendly games.
- Pupils are courteous, polite and show respect to one another, and to adults and visitors. They display a strong sense of pride in their academy and regularly share their learning with parents in assemblies.
- A small number of parents expressed concerns regarding the way in which the academy deals with bullying. During the inspection, inspectors were unable to find examples of this. Pupils report that incidents of poor behaviour are rare and that there is no bullying. The academy's own records show that incidents of bullying are rare and that they are followed up by senior leaders. The academy is prompt to respond to any issues that arise by including teaching through personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education
- Rates of attendance are above the national average. Pupils are keen to come to school and know that regular attendance and good punctuality support their learning.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Outcomes for pupils require improvement because progress is too variable across all subjects and most year groups. This is because the quality of teaching has not been consistently good enough over time.
- By the end of Year 6, more pupils are making the progress expected of them over time in reading, but not in writing and mathematics. Similarly, not enough pupils are making better than expected progress in writing and mathematics, although they do in reading.
- The most-able pupils are not achieving as well as they should in writing and mathematics. This is because teaching does not typically challenge them to make better than expected progress.
- By the end of Year 6, the gap between disadvantaged pupils' attainment and progress compared with that of other pupils generally widened. The academy's information on these pupils' progress shows that some of the current pupils are not making the required progress.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are making at least expected progress. This is because appropriate plans are in place to match teaching to their learning needs. Detailed personalised programmes are put in place where required.
- Pupils achieve well in the Year 1 phonics (the sounds that letters make) screen. In the last three years, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected level has been above the national average.
- Outcomes for pupils by the end of Year 2 have improved. In 2015, pupils' attainment was above the national average in writing and mathematics and significantly above in reading.
- Reception children are generally well prepared for transition to Year 1 as a high proportion achieve a good level of development. Year 6 pupils would be better prepared for starting secondary school if they made expected or better than expected progress in writing and mathematics.

Early years provision

is good

- Children start in the early years with skills and abilities that are generally typical for their age. From their starting points, most children make good progress. The academy's proportion of children reaching a good level of development has been above the national average for the past three years and improved considerably in 2015. As a result, children are well prepared for Year 1.
- The deputy headteacher and the early years teacher have brought about important improvements in the quality of provision, organisation of resources, and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development to further improve the provision in early years.

- Leaders work well with parents and there are strong systems in place for communication between the academy and parents. As a result, parents are involved well with assessments of their children's progress. There are good partnerships with other professionals, such as the speech and language service, to ensure that all children's needs are effectively met. The academy receives children from a number of nursery providers and strives to ensure that children are supported well to settle quickly into the Reception class. Effective systems are in place for children starting Reception and then for transition to Year 1.
- The quality of teaching is good. The early years teacher works well with other staff to create an effective team which provides teaching that is well matched to children's needs. Expectations are high and as a result children achieve well. The accuracy of assessments has been sharpened by working with the local authority and a group of other schools.
- Children have a range of opportunities to develop their writing. They enjoy these and some children are demonstrating good independent writing skills. Adults do not always provide sufficient encouragement to ensure greater engagement of children with writing activities. Staff make effective use of questioning to help children make good progress in number work. Early reading skills development, including phonics, is strong and this means that children make a good start with their early reading development.
- Disadvantaged children and those with special educational needs are provided with specifically targeted activities which accelerate their learning.
- Children enjoy their learning and develop curiosity. For example, one child posed the question, 'How can I get my boat to float?' and then experimented with different amounts of putty to discover a solution.
- Children make good progress with their physical development. They are provided with a range of activities and encouragement to take risks in a structured and safe way to develop these skills. For example, in a PE lesson children enthusiastically developed their balancing skills while carefully walking across PE benches.
- Children's personal development has been an aspect of increased focus for the academy. Expectations of children's behaviour are high and staff provide clear guidance for children. As a result, children listen well, follow adults' instructions carefully, cooperate with other children and take turns. Children are confident and keen to share their learning.
- Children feel safe and secure in the academy. Safety is paramount to staff, and children are supervised well in a safe, secure classroom and outside learning area. Safeguarding is effective and all welfare requirements are met.

School details

Unique reference number	139533
Local authority	Darlington
Inspection number	10003428

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.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Malcolm Frank
Headteacher	Chris Peacock
Telephone number	01325 380821
Website	www.holyfamilyprimary.org.uk
Email address	admin@holyfamily.darlington.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10 January 2012

Information about this academy

- The academy is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- There is one full-time Reception class.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is below average. (Pupil premium is the funding the school receives for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.)
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those pupils who speak English as an additional language is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and with a statement of SEN or an education, health and care plan is below the national average.
- Mobility levels of pupils joining and leaving the academy are typically well below the national average.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school converted to academy status in April 2013 and is part of the Carmel Education Trust.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a range of lessons and part lessons in all seven classes. The headteacher joined the lead inspector for four of the observations in lessons on the first day of the inspection.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around school and reviewed the academy's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The inspectors observed pupils in the playground and during lunchtime.
- The inspector scrutinised pupils' work in their books and in the learning journals of children in the early years. The headteacher joined the lead inspector for the scrutiny of a sample of writing books.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and teachers responsible for leading English and early years provision, and the special educational needs coordinator. The lead inspector met with a group of governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body and the Chief Executive Officer for Carmel Education Trust. The lead inspector held a telephone meeting with a representative from the Hexham and Newcastle Diocese.
- A group of pupils discussed their opinions about the academy, their attitudes and their learning with the lead inspector. Inspectors listened to six Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 pupils read.
- Inspectors took account of the responses on Ofsted's online parent survey, Parent View. Inspectors held discussions with parents at the start of the school day on day two.
- The lead inspector considered the online staff questionnaire and pupil questionnaire responses received.
- Inspectors observed the academy's work and looked at a number of documents, including minutes from meetings of the governing body, pupils' achievement information, the academy's evaluation of its own performance and its development plan. Behaviour and attendance records and information relating to safeguarding were also scrutinised.

Inspection team

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