

# Holywell Church of England Primary School

Tawstock, Barnstaple, Devon EX31 3HZ

## Inspection dates

14–15 March 2017

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The headteacher and governors have provided determined leadership to bring the school through a challenging period of change.
- Leaders, including governors, have rectified the areas identified for development in the previous inspection and are now sustaining a rapid pace of improvement.
- The school is an inclusive community. Parents value the school's supportive atmosphere for learning and the strong promotion of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Leaders ensure that safeguarding and welfare procedures are fully implemented and keep pupils safe.
- Relatively recent strengthening of some middle leadership roles has not yet had time to have a full positive impact on pupils' academic outcomes.
- Leaders have forged productive links within a cooperative of schools to develop staff skills, re-establish good teaching across the school and enhance pupils' learning experiences.
- Holywell is a school of choice for a significant number of parents because of the high-quality care and attention that pupils receive.
- Leaders ensure that additional funds to support disadvantaged pupils and to enrich pupils' sporting experiences are used well.
- Teachers plan their teaching and support well to meet pupils' different learning needs. On occasion, when pupils clearly show their mathematical understanding, teachers do not adjust the challenge quickly enough to promote even faster progress.
- The pupils greatly value their supportive relationships with staff and other pupils. These help them to behave and work well. Consequently, their attendance is above average.
- Pupils are making rapid progress in this academic year, but attainment in writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6 still requires improvement.
- Pupils develop good speaking and listening skills and use them well to enrich their learning.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities or emotional and behavioural needs is a strength of the school.
- Children typically make rapid progress in all aspects of their learning in the pre-school and during their time in Reception.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that teachers sustain pupils' currently rapid progress and further raise pupils' attainment in writing and mathematics by:
  - placing a more consistent emphasis on developing pupils' handwriting and their ability to spell words accurately so that more pupils attain at the highest level
  - adjusting the level of challenge necessary to ensure that all pupils learn how to solve mathematical problems to the best of their ability, particularly those of middle ability who had not previously met expected standards.
- Strengthen the roles and skills of middle leaders so that they can contribute even more effectively to raising standards in their areas of subject responsibility across the school.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The headteacher's strong and widely respected leadership has been instrumental in securing rapid improvement in teaching and pupils' learning.
- Aided by an effective staff team and with the strong support of informed governors, the headteacher has steered the school through a difficult period. Over the past year, their strong leadership and effective use of expertise across the cooperative trust have secured consistently good teaching and improved pupils' learning. These reflect good development of the aspects identified for improvement in the previous inspection.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced significant difficulties. These have included uncertainty in staffing and a rapid, almost doubling, of the number of pupils attending the school. For some time, despite leaders' diligent actions, these exceptional factors constrained leaders' efforts to sustain pupils' good progress.
- This academic year, renewed stability in staffing, new appointments and focused professional development are rapidly moving pupils' outcomes to good. Strengthened assessment procedures have deepened teachers' understanding of what pupils need to be taught next to improve. This has enriched the pupils' attitudes to learning and their reading, speaking and listening skills, further demonstrating the school's secure capacity to improve.
- Middle leaders are contributing effectively to raising pupils' writing and mathematical skills. However, their strengthened work has not been in place long enough to have a full positive impact.
- Leaders provide a vibrant, well-balanced and broad curriculum that supports pupils' good progress and their full interest and commitment to learning. Pupils have plentiful opportunities to extend their literacy and numeracy skills across the range of subjects. These include, for example, outdoor learning in the school's woodland area and studying religious education with pupils in other schools.
- Additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used well. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities also benefit from carefully personalised support. As a result, they are fully included in school life and make good progress in developing their communication and mathematical skills.
- Leaders make good use of the primary physical education and sport funding. In collaboration with their partner schools, leaders ensure that pupils have good opportunities to take part in competitive and team sports. All pupils are encouraged to participate fully, and due regard is given to supporting those pupils capable of excelling, especially, for example, in gymnastics.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Pupils learn about other cultures through assemblies, topics and visits to schools in the cooperative trust and wider communities. For example, pupils join with their peers in their federated partner school to visit London and the Houses of Parliament. As a result, when talking to the inspector, pupils demonstrated a very good knowledge and understanding of modern

Britain and British values.

- Most parents are very positive about the school and welcome the productive links with other schools. Parents particularly value the school's caring community atmosphere and the way staff treat pupils equally and eliminate discrimination. A small number of parents expressed concerns about the increase in the number of pupils now attending the school and the mixed-age classes.
- The local authority has provided supportive training for staff and governors. It has played an effective role in encouraging the staff to share and develop their expertise with other schools to improve teaching and assessment procedures.

### **Governance of the school**

- Governors provide effective support and challenge to school leaders.
- Despite several unforeseen challenges, the governors have sustained a determined focus on the strategic development of the school since the previous inspection. These have included widening the learning experiences provided for the pupils by establishing the pre-school provision and joining a cooperative trust.
- Governors have provided valued pastoral assistance to the staff in bringing the school through a difficult period. Governors have fully supported the headteacher in providing effective professional development for teachers and leaders.
- The governors have engaged well in training to help them fully meet their statutory responsibilities. Governors respond diligently to the headteacher's and local authority's reports to check and ensure that action plans lead to the required improvements. Governors liaise well with leaders across the cooperative trust and make sure that available expertise is used well to improve the school.
- Governors are fully committed to the inclusive ethos of the school. They play a valued role in sustaining good links with parents and the local community in support of pupils' learning.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff across the school and federation share their expertise to sustain a strong programme of training in all aspects of safeguarding. This helps staff maintain a mindful and effective culture of safeguarding practice that keeps pupils safe.
- Records on the suitability of staff and others supervising pupils are completed thoroughly and checked regularly in accordance with statutory requirements.
- The school is the specific choice of many parents, especially those with children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This is as a result of the individual care that staff provide for pupils and the diligent way they consult with external agencies and specialists to secure their welfare. The staff of the school know the pupils very well and sustain carefully planned programmes of individual support to assist pupils considered vulnerable.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils' improved, and now typically good, learning stems from a significant improvement in the quality of teaching across the school. Teaching is now consistently good and is driving pupils' rapid progress in all classes.
- Over the past 12 months, several initiatives have steadily raised the quality of teaching and pupils' learning. These have included, for example, encouraging and teaching pupils how to become more resilient and persevere more in their own learning. Leaders have also taken more decisive action to rectify weaker teaching and to lift expectations of what pupils should be achieving.
- Teachers and teaching assistants relate very supportively with pupils and value their efforts. These relationships promote pupils' confidence and sustain their good behaviour. Teachers also present a stimulating range of learning experiences to the pupils that motivate them and keep them focused on their learning. For example, pupils in all classes make frequent visits to the school's woodland area to study the natural world.
- Leaders have radically revised and improved the teaching of reading and especially of phonics over the past year. The teaching of phonics and reading is now structured better to build systematically on pupils' differing starting points and is more consistently effective. As a result, pupils are rapidly improving their skills and are reading books for enjoyment and to support their learning.
- Teachers are focusing successfully on extending pupils' basic numeracy skills. They are also deepening pupils' ability to think and explore different ways of solving mathematical problems. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 enjoyed their work and learned well when devising their own ways of solving number problems.
- Teachers in other classes are also providing challenging work and support for pupils, especially some middle-ability pupils, who had previously not met expected standards. As a result, most pupils are making rapid progress and reaching at least age-related expectations. On occasion, when it is clear that some pupils have secure understanding, staff do not raise the level of challenge swiftly enough and this limits progress.
- Teachers' secure subject knowledge enables them to question pupils to challenge and extend their thinking. Pupils respond enthusiastically by sharing their ideas with their partners. All pupils, but especially the most able, relish being challenged to explain fully the reasons behind their answers to questions. As a result, pupils in all classes make rapid progress in developing their speaking and listening skills and use them well to support their successful learning.
- Leaders have provided very supportive training for staff and have established accurate procedures for assessing pupils' progress. As a result, teachers know the pupils well and give accurate feedback to pupils about what they need to improve. Pupils also respond well to teachers' guidance by self-checking and editing their work. This is improving pupils' ability to present their work neatly and to complete longer pieces of meaningful, expressive writing.
- Pupils talk knowledgeably about the 'non-negotiable' expectations teachers present to them and say that these are helping them to improve their work. This extra guidance

includes improving handwriting and spelling, but it has not yet been sustained long enough to ensure that all pupils fully develop these skills.

- Teachers deploy and use teaching assistants effectively. Staff provide high levels of pastoral care and make valuable contributions to pupils' learning, especially in supporting pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, these pupils and others who have emotional needs are included in all activities and make rapid progress from their different starting points. Parents speak highly of the level of care and guidance that their children receive.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff cultivate very supportive relationships with the pupils. They support these confidence-boosting relationships with high levels of pastoral care.
- All staff give high regard to keeping pupils safe and get to know the pupils well. As a result, the pupils feel safe and valued and develop the good resilience and participation in learning which are now underpinning their rapid progress.
- Adults who visit the school acknowledge the politeness of the pupils and their desire and efforts to help each other to learn.
- When questioned, the pupils demonstrate their understanding of British values. They talk maturely about modern multicultural Britain and assert that 'We should treat each other with equal respect.'
- Pupils talk with clear awareness about the way staff are helping them to take more care when presenting their work. They say that this is helping them to learn better, but accept that at times their handwriting and spelling could be improved.
- Pupils undertake their various responsibilities diligently. These include, for example, representing their classmates on the school council and helping younger pupils or those seeking support by sitting on the 'Buddy Bench' at breaktime.
- Pupils are very proud when representing their school in sports competitions, most notably at a high level in gymnastics.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- During the inspection, pupils behaved well and showed respect for adults' guidance and each other's views.
- Pupils willingly and diligently respond to teachers' questioning and encouragement to explain and share their ideas. This is a key factor driving their rapidly improving progress.
- Pupils' determined and positive attitudes to learning were evident in every class during the inspection. For example, pupils eagerly came forward to show their improved work to the inspector.

- When questioned, pupils say that behaviour is good and is better now than at times in the past. Pupils know what bullying is and talk knowledgeably about racial and cyber abuse. Pupils say that there is no bullying, which is borne out by discussions with parents and an examination of the school's records.
- Pupils acknowledge that, at times, a small number of their classmates still need adult guidance to stop them fidgeting and help them concentrate more during discussions in class.
- Pupils enjoy school and this is confirmed by parents. It is also evident in school records, which show that pupils' attendance over time has consistently been above the national average.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Requires improvement

- Pupils' outcomes, although improving, still require improvement. This is because some pupils have not made good enough progress and have failed to reach expected levels of attainment over time. Most recent national assessments indicated that this was especially the case for middle-ability pupils in writing and mathematics.
- Over time, pupils' confident ability to solve mathematical problems has not been developed well enough. Teachers now routinely set problems for pupils to think about and investigate to deepen their understanding. This productive emphasis continues in all classes and is promoting faster progress, but it has not been applied long enough to develop pupils' skills fully.
- Similarly, the quality of pupils' handwriting and spelling is variable and requires improvement. Currently, pupils respond well to teachers' raised expectations of well-presented work, and some pupils, especially girls, write neatly and legibly more often.
- School and inspection checks of pupils' work show that pupils of all abilities in key stages 1 and 2 are now making rapid progress this academic year. This is seen in the expected age-related levels of attainment now demonstrated by pupils in their work in books and performance in school tests.
- All pupils, at their different stages of development, are using punctuation more accurately to construct meaningful sentences. They concentrate well and are producing more extensive pieces of writing.
- Pupils' eager responses to teachers' questions also show their well-developed speaking and listening skills. Pupils use these skills with increasing ability to achieve well from their different starting points. This is especially so for the most able pupils, who enjoy talking about their research findings and make accelerated progress when challenged to explain their ideas fully.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from high-quality personal care. They make good progress as a result of the precisely crafted work and specialist support they receive.
- There have been too few disadvantaged pupils in Years 2 and 6 to compare their progress and achievements meaningfully with other pupils nationally. School and inspection checks show that these pupils respond well to additional support from adults and make good progress from their different starting points.

- Over time, pupils have made better progress in reading than in writing and mathematics. This is despite scores in the national phonics screening checks in Years 1 and 2 remaining below the national average. Currently, in response to much-improved teaching of phonics, pupils are also making good progress in developing their phonic understanding, as well as reading skills.
- The pupils across Years 1 to 6 who read to the inspector demonstrated confidence and good ability for their age. The younger pupils showed their well-developed knowledge of letter sounds when tackling new words and the older pupils read fluently and with accurate expression. Pupils read widely and also extend their literacy and numeracy skills successfully to advance their learning across the range of subjects.
- All pupils, boys in particular, are applying themselves effectively and with increased vigour this academic year because of the interesting topics teachers present to them. For example, during the inspection, pupils in Years 5 and 6 produced imaginative designs and wrote with good expression about their Wallace and Gromit 'Bed Launchers'.

### Early years provision

**Good**

- The early years leader collaborates successfully with early years staff across the federation to sustain good leadership and teaching. She works effectively with the teaching assistant and with the leader of the pre-school to help children learn well.
- Reception and pre-school staff ensure that the early years provision stimulates children's interests. Children make good progress across all areas of learning because adults teach them effectively and encourage them to think. Consequently, children are well prepared for future learning in Year 1.
- Reception and pre-school staff also liaise supportively with parents. In response, parents welcome the close relationships they share with staff and appreciate the diligent way that staff get to know the children.
- Children of all abilities, including the disadvantaged, the most able and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, behave well and enjoy sharing ideas and learning together.
- Pre-school and Reception children share and make good use of the school's interesting indoor and outdoor facilities. Staff ensure that the children learn well across a range of activities, both those led and supported by adults and those they choose by themselves. For example, children practise their mark-making skills and explore their own imaginatively created animal habitats.
- Children start their Reception Year in the combined pre-school, Reception and Year 1 class with skills and understanding that are typical for their age. Over time, most reach a good level of development and are ready for Year 1.
- Adults in the pre-school and Reception assess the children's developing skills effectively. They make good use of assessment information and gather children's ideas and interests to plan the curriculum and to make sure that children progress well.
- The early years leader ensures that the welfare needs of children in the pre-school and in Reception are fully secured. Staff update their safeguarding and first aid training

regularly to keep children safe. As a result, children feel safe and develop self-confidence.

- Teaching is good, with adults questioning the children skilfully to develop their understanding. Adults develop the children's knowledge of phonics effectively by, for example, emphasising letter sounds when talking with them as they planted seeds.
- The children benefit from good opportunities to record their ideas and to extend their communication, literacy and numeracy skills. On occasion, opportunities to show the children more precisely how to hold pencils and form letters correctly are missed and this limits their progress.

## School details

Unique reference number	113380
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10025008

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	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	103
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Linda Watt
Executive headteacher	Susan Denham
Telephone number	01271 345908
Website	<a href="http://www.holywell.devon.sch.uk/">www.holywell.devon.sch.uk/</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:adminh@gatewayfed.org.uk">adminh@gatewayfed.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	7–8 March 2013

## Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Holywell Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school and has grown considerably in size since the previous inspection.
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and a well-below-average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. However, it is very high in some year groups.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well below average.
- Children experience early years provision in a combined pre-school, Reception and Year 1 class. The other pupils across the school are also taught in three mixed year-group

classes across Years 1 to 6.

- Holywell is federated with Bratton Fleming Primary School as a member of the Gateway Federation. The two schools share the same executive headteacher and governing body.
- In April 2013, the federation joined up with eight other local primary schools to become the Three Valleys Learning Partnership, a cooperative trust.
- There have been several changes in staff since the previous inspection.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed pupils learning in all classes accompanied by the headteacher. He also attended an assembly and talked with pupils at lunch and during breaktimes.
- A wide range of documents were scrutinised, including records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance, safeguarding procedures and the school's self-evaluation.
- The inspector examined the school's systems for monitoring progress and records of checks on the quality of teaching.
- The inspector talked to individual pupils and a representative group of pupils about the school and their work. He listened to individual pupils reading and examined an extensive sample of pupils' work across a range of subjects and classes.
- The inspector met with members of the governing body and held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. Meetings were held with other teaching staff, mainly about their senior and/or middle leadership roles. The inspector also spoke informally with several teaching assistants and support staff.
- The views expressed in the 23 online responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire and eight staff questionnaires were considered. In addition, the inspector gathered the views of several parents during informal meetings at the school and considered parents' written comments.

## Inspection team

Alexander Baxter, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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