

Holy Trinity Catholic School

Oakley Road, Small Heath, Birmingham, West Midlands B10 0AX

Inspection dates

5–6 December 2017

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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Since his appointment, the new headteacher and his effective senior team have transformed the school. Staff and pupils agree that teaching is more effective, relationships between members of the school community are healed, and everyone is pulling together to help pupils succeed.
- Pupils' progress has improved. Overall, in 2016 and 2017, Year 11 pupils made strong progress from their starting points. Sometimes, however, pupils whose prior attainment is high do not make the progress that they are capable of.
- The curriculum is exciting because pupils are able to study a wide range of courses which are appropriate to their needs and interests.
- The school has a strong safeguarding culture. It threads through everything that the school does. It is leaders' top priority.
- The school's motto: 'learn to love, love to learn' is understood by everyone. Staff and pupils actively care for one another and their community.
- The interim executive board supports and challenges leaders expertly. Its members have a deep knowledge of the school and are highly committed to it.
- Pupils' good behaviour means that teachers are free to teach well-planned lessons which pupils enjoy. Relationships between pupils and their teachers are warm and respectful.
- The range of extra-curricular activities is underdeveloped and not yet monitored well.
- In science, some classes still have gaps in their knowledge. Leaders know about this and are acting to remedy it.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve most-able pupils' progress by:
 - continually evaluating the new strategies that leaders have implemented to see which ones work best
 - making sure that pupils know what the highest-level answers look like in all subjects.
- Fill the remaining gaps in pupils' scientific knowledge caused by the turbulence in staffing in science.
- Increase the number of pupils choosing to take part in extra-curricular activities, by:
 - expanding the range of opportunities on offer
 - carefully tracking pupils' involvement with the activities.
- Improve pupils' knowledge of further and higher education and careers in key stage 3. Do this by making the information, advice and guidance programme for these pupils as strong as the programme in place for the rest of the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The new headteacher, ably supported by his strong leadership team, has taken the actions needed to improve the school. Many staff who spoke with inspectors described leadership as 'collaborative'. They feel that they can all play a part in improving the school. Staff are united in the drive to maintain the quality of care and learning that they have created.
- Leaders' priority to stabilise the school has been successful. Leaders are no longer reliant on the package of external support that the diocese and local authority brokered in the past.
- Leadership at all levels has been improved. As one middle leader commented: 'Senior leaders are transparent and rigorous. There is a strong link between middle and senior leaders, and they have put in effective systems that we use to improve the school.' Middle leaders feel empowered to fulfil their roles and all leaders follow the vision set by the headteacher.
- Leaders' self-evaluation is comprehensive and honest. They accurately identify their strengths and weaknesses, which results in swift improvements when they are needed.
- Tracking of pupils' progress is effective. Leaders have a deep understanding of progress information, which helps them take effective actions when individual pupils or groups fall behind.
- The system of training, monitoring staff performance, target setting and appraisal is strong. Training closely matches staff's needs, links to their challenging performance targets and enhances pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders spend the extra funding for disadvantaged pupils wisely. They look at individual pupils' needs carefully and ensure that the support given matches them. For example, where appropriate, disadvantaged pupils are provided with uniform, school equipment, health and well-being services, and support for family and housing.
- Extra funding for pupils who arrive in school with low skills in literacy and numeracy is used very effectively. A team of people is involved which strengthens the range of support that is available. Subject leaders, the librarian and pupil support staff come together to improve pupils' literacy skills, for example. Pupils make swift progress in their reading and comprehension which allows them to access all of the curriculum.
- The curriculum is rich because pupils have the opportunity to study a wide range of subjects alongside a host of other activities that contribute to their personal development. Leaders think of pupils first when designing the curriculum. They make annual adaptations depending on pupils' needs. They have maintained a rich academic curriculum while introducing a vocational curriculum which successfully allows pupils to follow their aspirations. The range of arts courses on offer to all pupils is impressive and a high number of pupils choose to take these courses. Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy taking a range of traditional academic subjects while also taking courses in art and drama, for example.

- Leaders have evaluated all areas of the curriculum to see where pupils learn about fundamental British values. They supplement this with an effective personal development curriculum. As a result, pupils' understanding of fundamental British values is strong.
- Where pupils need a more bespoke curriculum to make better progress, leaders make sure that this is available. They offer effective support to pupils new to formal education, specialist teaching for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, and rapid, effective intervention for pupils who have low literacy and numeracy skills.
- While there are a number of extra-curricular activities, leaders want to develop the range further so that all pupils can get involved in activities that interest them. Leaders also acknowledge that they need to increase the number of pupils getting involved, and track pupils' involvement more closely.

Governance of the school

- The interim executive board (IEB) has taken the action needed to secure strong, effective, sustainable leadership in the school. Its members have done this by focusing on developing leadership at all levels. They are uncompromising in their vision for the school's success and give leaders the support and challenge that they need. As a result, staff say that the school is a vibrant and happy place to work.
- Members of the IEB are highly skilled and knowledgeable. They know the school very well and understand the local context. Their evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is piercingly accurate.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All checks on staff are complete and vetting systems are fit for purpose. Where staff come from external companies, agencies or voluntary organisations, thorough checks are completed.
- A culture of safeguarding abounds in this school. It is promoted determinedly by the IEB, monitored by the headteacher and can be seen through the curriculum, the vigilance of staff, and pupils' experiences. Staff are highly alert to the signs of pupils being at risk, and respond swiftly to any concerns. Staff are regularly and effectively trained in safeguarding.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Very strong relationships between teachers and pupils mean that in lessons, teachers focus fully on pupils' learning. Pupils are keen to learn, keen to do their best, and respond well to their lessons. High levels of respect mean that pupils are confident to question, challenge and argue their points constructively with their teachers.
- Pupils say that their teachers are always willing to explain things well. In many cases, teachers explain complex concepts with ease. For example, in an English lesson, the teacher explained tough vocabulary and concepts in a way that pupils understood.

They could then use these concepts and vocabulary to move to even more demanding work.

- Pupils' oracy is a high priority and teachers focus on this consistently. They expect pupils to speak confidently and accurately, rephrase their ideas, pronounce words correctly and communicate clearly. Teachers model this precision of communication.
- While it has been a weakness in the past, support for the most able pupils is now very effective. It is contributing to current most-able pupils' secure progress. Teachers use every available minute of lessons to extend these pupils' learning, deepen their understanding and build their confidence. Leaders have assigned each most-able pupil a mentor. These mentors look closely at pupils' progress, identify areas for improvement and arrange extra teaching when required. As a result, these pupils feel that their progress is very well taken care of. They are making swift progress towards their target grades.
- In a range of subjects, teachers plan lessons that are dynamic and highly engaging. For example, in art inspectors saw pupils diligently honing their skills in a range of media and producing work of a very high quality. Pupils felt that they were developing as artists.
- Teachers' questioning has developed well as a response to training in this area. It is particularly effective for most-able pupils. However, sometimes, teachers ask questions that not all pupils understand. Leaders know this and are continuing to develop teachers' questioning skills.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are extremely proud of their school. They are articulate about what makes their school a great place to learn.
- Pupils specifically value the caring culture and the school's diversity. One pupil summed up the views of many others: 'This is a Catholic school. There are people of all faiths and none and the school prepares us well for life in a diverse society. No matter who you are at this school, you thrive.'
- The caring culture of the school exists because everyone contributes to it. Pupils told inspectors that they take responsibility for caring for one another and that the school helps them to understand how to build a strong community. Leaders put on days where pupils actively think about and demonstrate the school's values. During these days, pupils are invited to log and celebrate the ways in which they demonstrate these values. Hundreds of pupils respond to this.
- Staff listen to pupils and respond to their concerns. Pupils feel confident to voice their ideas and gave inspectors examples of things that leaders had done to improve the school at their request.
- The curriculum for safeguarding is comprehensive. It takes into consideration risks that are particular to the local area. It gives pupils tools to keep themselves safe from a

wide range of issues that face young people such as sexting, cyber bullying, fraud, sexual exploitation, crime and abuse. The well-informed pupils are, and feel, safe.

- Pupils say that bullying is rare, but they are confident that if it did happen, their teachers would deal with it effectively.
- The school's caring culture extends to pupils who attend alternative provision. Leaders choose placements very carefully and monitor pupils' attendance, progress and welfare in these placements closely. As a result, these pupils' personal development and welfare are secure.
- Pupils benefit from impartial careers advice. Where families have no prior experience of further or higher education, leaders make sure that they get the advice and guidance they need. Pupils are highly aspirational, and many are exceptionally well informed about their next steps. However, careers advice in key stage 3 has yet to be fully developed.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is consistently good. They behave respectfully towards their teachers and each other. Pupils told inspectors that this was because the school's ethos is understood by everyone, and all pupils want to maintain the ethos.
- Pupils' use of inappropriate or prejudicial language is extremely rare and pupils told inspectors that if this language is ever heard, teachers take consistent action. One pupil told inspectors, of prejudicial language: 'It's not acceptable because it doesn't value others. It's really not acceptable here.'
- There have been no recent permanent exclusions, and fixed-term exclusions have fallen to well below the national average. Repeat fixed-term exclusions are rare.
- Pupils' attendance has been weak in the past but is now much improved. It is now in line with the national average. Persistent absence has fallen to well below the national average. Though it is improving quickly, disadvantaged pupils' attendance is not yet as strong as the national average for other pupils. Leaders know this and are continuing to take effective action to improve it.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In 2016 and 2017, pupils' progress at the end of Year 11 was good. Across a range of subjects, pupils made progress in line with other pupils nationally with similar starting points. Over the last two years, the percentage of pupils gaining a standard pass in both English and mathematics has risen. In 2017, Year 11 pupils made progress in line with their target grades in science. The published progress measure does not reflect this.
- Pupils whose prior attainment is low make particularly strong progress across a range of subjects. This reflects the effective support and appropriate curriculum for these pupils.

- Overall, current disadvantaged pupils are making progress in line with other pupils nationally with similar starting points.
- A team of staff is dedicated to developing a reading culture in the school. They have done this successfully. Library staff track pupils' reading and comprehension, and work effectively to increase the number of books that pupils borrow. Leaders make sure that the library is well stocked and as a result, pupils' borrowing is regular. Inspectors spoke with pupils who proudly shared their reading logs, spoke about the quality of books available in the library, and their love of reading. Many are becoming prolific, avid readers.
- For the pupils who struggle with reading most, a team of staff has designed effective intervention strategies. For example, following a few months of focused teaching, one group of particularly weak readers made very strong progress in their reading skills.
- In the past, pupils have made weaker progress in humanities and languages. This was because of staffing issues in these subjects. Pupils' progress in these subjects is improving quickly now because of stable staffing and high-quality teaching.
- In some subjects, pupils who have high prior attainment do not reach the very highest GCSE grades. Leaders know this and have implemented an effective plan to remedy it. Current most-able pupils, including the disadvantaged, are making stronger progress towards their challenging targets. Most-able pupils told inspectors that they are consistently challenged to reach the highest standards, and inspectors observed this in lessons.
- Pupils are well prepared for their next steps. They aspire to a wide range of challenging study and careers. The percentage of pupils not in education, employment and training (NEET) has reduced rapidly. As a result of effective support, all pupils in 2017 went on to appropriate destinations.

School details

Unique reference number	103538
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10043604

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	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	621
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	Daniel Taylor
Headteacher	Colin Crehan
Telephone number	0121 772 0184
Website	www.holytrc.bham.sch.uk/
Email address	enquiry@holytrc.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	15–16 December 2015

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- A small number of pupils are educated in alternative provision at EBN2 and St George's Academy.
- The school receives support from Archbishop Ilsley Catholic School, Birmingham, with which it shares an executive headteacher. It is also supported by a local education partnership.
- The school meets the current government floor standards for secondary schools.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection converted from a monitoring inspection to a Section 5 inspection.
- Inspectors visited parts of lessons, scrutinised pupils' work, spoke with pupils about their learning and analysed data on their progress.
- To take into account pupils' views, inspectors spoke with many pupils informally, and met formally with three groups of pupils.
- Inspectors met with representatives of the interim executive board, the diocesan board and a school improvement consultant.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including information about safeguarding and child protection, attendance, behaviour, curriculum and performance management.
- Inspectors met with school leaders, subject leaders and teachers to gather their views about the school.
- There were insufficient responses to Parent View for inspectors to consider.

Inspection team

Dan Owen, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Huw Bishop	Ofsted Inspector
Derek Barnes	Ofsted Inspector
Gwendoline Onyon	Ofsted Inspector

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