

Inspection of Holy Souls Catholic Primary School

Mallard Close, Acocks Green, Birmingham, West Midlands B27 6BN

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 September 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Rachel Girling. This school is part of St Teresa of Calcutta Catholic Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Professor Paul Ryan, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Frances McGarry.

What is it like to attend this school?

Holy Souls is a caring, friendly school that nurtures warm, positive relationships between pupils, parents, carers and staff. Staff make time to get to know pupils. They care about each individual and work hard to promote pupils' well-being. This makes the school a happy, welcoming and inclusive place to learn.

Parents describe the school as being like a family. They are appreciative of the pastoral support that the school provides for its pupils and families. The school seeks parents' views in a variety of ways, and parents report that they value this.

The school has high expectations for behaviour and learning. The school makes sure that teachers know what to teach pupils so that pupils gain and build knowledge in a broad range of subjects. Staff promote a love of reading and pupils read widely.

Pupils' calm and purposeful behaviour in classrooms and around the school fully represents the school's values.

Pupils know that they are safe in school. They say that there is always a trusted adult who will help them. They know that their voice is heard and that their opinions matter.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school has developed an ambitious curriculum to offer a broad range of rich experiences for pupils to learn about the world and where they live. Leaders have rightly prioritised the teaching of phonics and early reading. The new programme for teaching early reading is effective. Staff have the right training to deliver the programme with accuracy and consistency. Pupils who require extra help with reading are supported well to catch up. For early readers, the books pupils read are closely matched to the sounds that they know. Pupils also choose books to read for pleasure. Pupils are looking forward to the opening of the new school library and say that they enjoy reading.

The school has focused its efforts on improving the curriculum. In most subjects, there is a clear expectation for what pupils should learn and when. Sequences of lessons build pupils' knowledge and skills over time. However, the development of reading beyond the phonics programme is not as effective. It is not clear what knowledge and skills pupils need to learn and when. This sometimes slows pupils' learning. For some subjects, such as mathematics and art, the changes are recent, so it is too early to see the impact on improving outcomes over time. The recent changes show that pupils are making progress and achieving well to prepare them for the next phase of their learning.

The school has high aspirations for all pupils and want them to thrive in learning and life. Teachers identify pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) effectively. Teachers' delivery of the curriculum is adapted, when necessary,

for pupils with SEND. Staff tailor support and resources to meet the needs of all pupils. The school ensures that pupils with SEND are fully included in all aspects of school life.

Children make a good start in the early years. The curriculum focuses on promoting children's effective communication and language, enhanced by carefully selected books. Adults support children to work together and share resources. Routines are well developed, and children know what is expected of them. The high expectations for behaviour evident across the school start in the early years.

The school places a high priority on pupils' personal development. The curriculum for personal, social and health education, which starts in the early years, is comprehensive. Staff ensure that pupils experience many opportunities to learn beyond the curriculum. Spiritual development is deeply rooted within the school, and this helps pupils to be reflective. Pupils understand, respect and appreciate difference. Pupils learn about human rights and responsibilities. They speak confidently about the importance of healthy relationships and of treating others with kindness. Pupils have plenty of opportunities to develop wider interests or talents. Pupils are given the opportunity to attend a wide variety of clubs that include soul singers, Irish dancing, computing, and arts and crafts. Many take up this offer and say that attending such clubs develops their confidence. They also enjoy learning in the on-site forest school. Pupils take pride in their roles as school ambassadors. They work with staff to plan events and fundraising activities.

Safeguarding is a priority across the school. All staff know that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Staff receive appropriate safeguarding training. This means that they have the knowledge and skills to identify pupils who may be at risk of harm. The school ensures that when they need it, pupils and families get the right support at the right time.

Improving attendance is a high priority for the school. The school takes swift and effective action to work closely with families to ensure that all pupils and their families know the importance of regular school attendance. However, despite the actions taken by the school, some pupils do not attend regularly enough. As a result, they are missing out on their learning.

Supported by the trust, staff make a difference for pupils at this school. Governors and trustees have a clear strategic oversight of the school. They are well informed to evaluate the effectiveness of the school. They provide effective support and challenge for the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils are regularly absent from school. This means that they are not learning as much as they should. The school should work closely with families to ensure that they understand the importance of regular attendance.
- Some teachers are not always clear about the steps of learning that are needed in some aspects of the teaching of reading beyond the phonics programme. This means that pupils are not always building their learning sequentially to become effective readers. The school should ensure that all aspects of the reading curriculum are carefully planned and sequenced so that pupils' knowledge and skills build over time.
- In a few subjects, improvements to the curriculum are recent. In these subjects, pupils do not gain the same depth of knowledge as they do in other subjects. Consequently, their recall of prior learning is sometimes limited. The school needs to ensure that pupils have the same detailed depth of knowledge in all subjects.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	147009
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10290662
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	349
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Frances McGarry
Headteacher	Rachel Girling
Website	www.holysoul.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school joined the St Teresa of Calcutta Catholic Academy Trust in April 2019.
- The school is within the Archdiocese of Birmingham. Its most recent section 48 inspection under the Education Act for schools of a religious character was carried out in May 2022.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision for pupils.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspectors met with the headteacher and senior leaders.
- The lead inspector met with representatives from the trust.
- The lead inspector talked to a representative from the diocese.
- The lead inspector met with representatives from the local governing body and trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, English, music, and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also examined pupils' work in science.
- The lead inspector listened to pupils read to a familiar adult.
- The inspectors considered a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans. Minutes of governing body meetings, trust board meetings and reports from external reviews were also scrutinised.
- Inspectors looked at records of pupils' attendance and behaviour. They observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school and talked to them about behaviour, bullying and welfare.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors talked to parents at the start of the school day and considered the free-text responses to Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also reviewed the responses to the staff survey and gathered the views of staff and pupils through discussion.

Inspection team

Cathy Young, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Martina Abbott	Ofsted Inspector
Linda Brown	Ofsted Inspector

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