

Holy Family Catholic Primary School, Witham

Inspection report

Unique reference number	115199
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	379035
Inspection dates	28–29 February 2012
Lead inspector	Richard Blackmore

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

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	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Elizabeth Murphy
Headteacher	Ann Kelliher
Date of previous school inspection	2 December 2008
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Richard Blackmore

Additional inspector

Diana Songer-Hudgell

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Over six hours were spent observing lessons taken by eight teachers and holding discussions with pupils about their learning. Inspectors held meetings with staff and five members of the governing body. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work and scrutinised pupils' books, assessment data and case studies of specific pupils. They also looked at evidence of the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning. The inspection team analysed 101 responses to the questionnaire sent to parents and carers.

Information about the school

The school is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school. Most pupils are White British, and an increasing number of pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is average. In addition to difficulties with literacy, pupils with special educational needs most commonly have multiple learning or speech, language and communication difficulties. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a Reception class. The school has achieved Healthy Schools status and the Eco-Schools Silver Award. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. There is sustained improvement; standards have risen and the quality of teaching has improved. Pupils' achievement has quickened under the drive, determination and high expectations of the headteacher. The school is not outstanding because progress in English is not as rapid as it is in mathematics, and teaching is not consistently outstanding.
- Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and all pupils' achievement is good throughout the school. Most reach above-average standards in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6. Progress in English is not as quick as in mathematics because pupils do not have enough opportunities to use literacy skills across all subjects and compose longer pieces of writing independently.
- Teachers stimulate the pupils' imaginations, drive learning forward at pace and are the foundation for good achievement. Sometimes teachers do not provide enough time for pupils to use marking to improve their work. Although teaching enables pupils to achieve well, occasionally, more-able pupils are not fully challenged.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are highly motivated and work hard. Pupils are polite, cooperate well with adults and each other and enjoy their learning.
- The headteacher is supported ably by the deputy headteacher, a well-led governing body and effective subject leaders. The school's performance is well managed. Leaders ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well promoted, especially through music and art. Pupils are given time to think through a good range of issues and this practice promotes a spirit of enquiry developing them as reflective citizens. Teaching is well led and staff receive helpful professional development and support to enhance their skills.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By the end of the summer term 2012, raise achievement in English to match that in mathematics by:
 - ensuring teachers plan for pupils to develop their literacy skills in different

- subjects more effectively.
 - teachers providing more opportunities for pupils to develop their skills as independent learners in literary activities.
- Improve the quality of teaching to be consistently outstanding by:
- always providing challenging activities for more-able pupils
 - making sure pupils have sufficient time to use the comments made in marking to improve their work.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are generally below age-related expectations. They make good progress because teaching and the curriculum support their learning effectively. Pupils continue to make good progress and achieve well throughout the school. From a low starting point, pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 reached standards in reading in 2011 that were below average, equivalent of a year behind the national averages, evidencing a dip from above-average standards reached in the previous four years. Pupils entering the school have lower levels of skills in literacy than mathematics but inspection evidence shows that reading attainment in Key Stage 1 is rising, and is already at the national average, because expectations have been raised and the quality of teaching is securely good. In Key Stage 2, standards in reading are above average, as confirmed by the inspection evidence. Their competence in reading, coupled with good progress overall, give pupils a firm foundation for success in secondary school and beyond. One parent commented, 'My child has been given a great start in life due to the love and commitment of the staff at Holy Family School. "Holy Family" lives out its name.'

In lessons, pupils are eager to learn, industrious and strive to give of their best. Pupils are always keen to answer questions and enjoy working independently in pairs and small groups, where they willingly contribute their ideas and work independently. For example, in a Year 4 literacy lesson, pupils excitedly tried to identify the key features of imaginative story telling in a section of a Harry Potter film, always listening respectfully to the views of others. In a few lessons, opportunities for pupils to find things out for themselves are too limited. Pupils have high aspirations and are determined to do well. Their very positive attitudes and the sensible way in which they work together contribute significantly to their effective acquisition of knowledge and development of essential skills.

Pupils new to the school make rapid progress because of the good assessment system that accurately identifies their abilities and learning needs. Use of this information results in very little variation in progress between different groups of pupils and if achievement of any pupil slows it is quickly tackled and improved. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress because of the effective support they receive which is well tailored to their individual speech, language and communication needs. Those who are known to be eligible for free school meals also make good progress and there is no difference in performance

related to pupils' backgrounds. Pupils who speak English as an additional language quickly gain confidence in speaking and writing in the language because of small-group and individual sessions that focus effectively on their needs. All pupils benefit from teaching, which is providing a sharper focus on stimulating their interest and setting tasks appropriate to their needs. Parents and carers are almost unanimous in their view that their children make good progress, and inspection findings endorse their views.

Quality of teaching

The inspection confirms the judgement of most parents and carers that their children are making good progress because they are taught well and their individual needs are carefully met. Much teaching is lively and pitched carefully at each pupil's needs in calm and purposeful classrooms. Children are given a stimulating start in the Early Years Foundation Stage because good, well-organised teaching creates learning opportunities that are personalised for the needs of every child. The careful balance between activities directed by the adults and those where the children take responsibility for developing their learning are now key features of the good teaching. However, this is not always the case throughout Key Stages 1 and 2 because sometimes teachers do not plan enough opportunities for pupils to write by themselves. This restriction limits the time they have to refine and improve their own writing skills. Adults take every opportunity to develop and extend the children's speaking and listening and make very frequent observations so they can plan the next steps in the children's learning.

Teachers are secure in knowing how well pupils throughout the school are doing and the needs of different groups. As a result, teachers generally plan activities that are usually appropriately challenging for different groups of learners by age and ability. Sometimes the level of challenge is too low for more-able pupils and, as a result, they occasionally make less progress than other groups of pupils. Teachers encourage 'talk partners' and good speaking opportunities. This helps them to generate ideas and use their learning targets which are clearly laid out in pupils' books. Consequently, pupils are often referring to the levels at which they are working. Marking of pupils' work is generally thorough and helpful, providing a good balance of praise and guidance for improvement. However, there is not always enough time for the pupils to respond to their teachers' comments and correct their work.

Teachers plan the curriculum well with a range of academic and personal development opportunities. For example, pupils in Year 5 used a video clip to identify new vocabulary such as 'generic' and 'rhetorical' to use in persuasive writing while another class held a class mass which involved pupils constantly and provided them with time to reflect on the importance of 'focus'. These opportunities successfully support the pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils are courteous, polite and support one another well, seen in the way the team of 29 committed play leaders – Year 6 pupils who organise activities at playtime – encourage others to play together happily under the careful and thoughtful

supervision of an adult play leader. Staff model by their actions how relationships can be built on mutual respect and consideration for the feelings of others. Consistency in this practice and in managing behaviour is the key to the school's success, making behaviour consistently good over time. The school has very comprehensive procedures in place to check on and promote attendance. As a result, and because of pupils' very positive attitudes towards school, attendance levels are above average. Punctuality to school and to lessons is consistently good.

Pupils demonstrate a very strong awareness of how to identify risks and keep themselves safe, for example through the 'Crucial Crew' training which reinforces safe practices, and gives them a good knowledge of the risks associated with new technology and the internet. Almost all parents and carers, and pupils and staff, in their responses to questionnaires, indicated pupils feel safe in school. A few parents and carers had concerns about how the school deals with bullying. The inspection team found that there is a robust policy and pupils said there is very little physical bullying, name calling or cyber bullying and, if there is any, it is dealt with quickly and effectively.

Leadership and management

Good leadership and management provide the school with a sharp focus on improvement and a clear vision for future development. Self-evaluation is accurate and informs good-quality strategic planning that provides a clear path for the successful implementation of its aims. School leaders have developed an environment in which there is a constant drive to raise achievement. The school has raised the involvement of subject leaders, who have successfully managed a wide range of improvement issues, including the progress of boys. The impact of effective leadership is also seen in the enhancing of teachers' skills by the establishment of consistent, high-quality lesson planning and an increased use of detailed and specific assessment data measuring the progress of every pupil.

The good curriculum is broad with well-developed provision for the needs of all pupils, using a range of technology to enhance learning. It builds well on pupils' previous learning and they comment excitedly on their wide extra-curricular opportunities, such as the Year 6 trip to Grafham Water. Programmes are adjusted carefully to meet the learning needs of all pupils and extended for those with particular talents through workshops held in partnership with other schools. Leaders' and managers' impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very positive. They promote a strong ethos for pupils to work and play together harmoniously, and pupils' actions show their strong understanding of right and wrong. Pupils' understanding of diversity and other cultures is promoted effectively through visits, a range of visitors to school and in the curriculum. However, opportunities to develop writing in different subjects are not always planned systematically and not all pupils find the contexts helpful for developing extended writing.

School leaders have worked effectively to engage with parents and carers who are always welcomed into the school. A large majority of parents and carers say that their views are sought and acted upon, and they are kept very well informed of the progress of their children. Safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements and

ensure that pupils are safe. The rigorous analysis of assessment data enables leaders to focus action when underachievement emerges or any pupils fall behind their individual targets. This good practice and the supportive atmosphere for pupils' learning and personal development reflect the school's rigorous attention to promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination.

The governing body provides good strategic direction and has been determinedly involved in the school's improvement. Governors provide a good level of challenge to school leaders, regularly analysing the performance of pupils and subsequently monitoring the improvement of any underachievement. Leaders and the governing body plan in detail to tackle key priorities. These features and sustained improvement in achievement and teaching since the previous inspection underpin the school's strong capacity for further improvement.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



1 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Holy Family Catholic Primary School, Witham, Witham, CM8 1DX

Thank you for being so welcoming when we came to visit your school. Your school provides you with a good education.

- You make good progress, particularly in mathematics.
- Your behaviour is good – so well done for that.
- You told us how much you enjoy coming to school.
- Your knowledge of keeping healthy is excellent.
- You told us how you feel very safe.
- Your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well supported by your school. It was a privilege to join you for the Year 4 class mass and I was impressed with how well you joined in and undertook many important jobs.
- Teaching is good and your lessons are interesting and fun.
- Your headteacher leads the school well.

Your school is keen to make things even better for you. We have asked the staff to do two things. We want your teachers to give you more opportunities to practise literacy skills in all subjects and use these skills independently. We also want your teachers to help those of you who learn quickly to have activities that always fully challenge you, and for all of you to act on the advice you get from marking to improve your work.

You can also help by making sure that you always do your best, keep concentrating in lessons and saying if you find work too easy.

Thank you again for welcoming us to your school and our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Richard Blackmore
Lead inspector

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