

The Holy Family Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117481
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	358145
Inspection dates	14–15 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Roderick Passant

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Karen Day
Headteacher	Catherine McMahon
Date of previous school inspection	22 January 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 12 lessons and nine staff teaching. Meetings were held with the headteacher and members of the senior leadership team, representatives from the governing body, the school council and a group of Year 6 pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation and policies including the school improvement plan. They scrutinised the questionnaire responses from 87 parents, 121 pupils and 13 staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following,

- How accurate school leaders are in judging the quality of learning and teaching in lessons?
- What are the key elements which are bringing about improvement?
- How effectively does the school support pupils' cultural development?

Information about the school

The school is about the same size as most other primary schools. The majority of pupils are White British with just over a quarter of pupils coming from a wide range of minority ethnic heritages. The number of pupils with English as an additional language is very small; even fewer are at an early stage of learning English. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average, as is the proportion with statements detailing their educational needs. Almost all of these pupils have needs associated with specific learning (dyslexia) or speech language and communication difficulties. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low. The school has gained Healthy School status. The school hosts a privately run breakfast and after-school club as part of its extended schools provision. Because they operate for less than two hours per session, they are not subject to inspection nor registration with Ofsted.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. Pupils achieve well and enjoy learning. This is reflected in their excellent attendance. They make good progress over their time in school. Attainment is above the national average by the end of Year 6. Pupils make good progress in their personal development. Behaviour in and around the school is good, and this contributes to pupils feeling very safe. Racist incidents are extremely rare and pupils report little deliberate unkindness. Older pupils take their roles as peer mediators very seriously and their involvement is welcomed by other pupils. The school council is active; it views its role as important because it informs adults what the pupils think. Pupils have a good understanding of what goes to make a healthy lifestyle and respond well to the various initiatives that school uses to promote healthy living. Pupils are known and valued as individuals. The school is an inclusive friendly community.

Pupils make good progress because in the large majority of lessons teaching and learning are good. Staff have good presentation skills and explain ideas well. Where learning is satisfactory, pupils spend too long listening to the teacher rather than taking an active role and developing their independent learning skills. Staff sometimes over-control the learning, rather than tapping into pupils' motivation, initiative or knowledge. Staff make good use of factual questions to remind pupils what they learnt earlier. Other 'open' questions, asking pupils to hypothesise, or predict are less frequent.

Staff care about the pupils a great deal. This is reflected in the well organised systems for meeting pupils' needs. The progress of all pupils is monitored carefully. Pupils in danger of slipping behind are identified early and appropriate catch-up strategies are put into place.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Currently adult-led activities dominate and there are not enough opportunities for children to make choices about aspects of their learning. Staff are aware of what needs to happen and are beginning to make the improvements needed.

The school has a cycle of reports and consultation meetings to keep parents and carers informed about their children's progress but it is evident from their returns that parents and carers want either more or improved information. In addition, some misunderstand school policy and practice, which gives them a negative view of the school.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and the school's senior leadership team have an accurate view of the school, particularly relating to pupils' learning. Teaching and attainment have improved. Given this track record, the capacity for sustained development is good.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop pupils' independent learning skills by:
- ensuring that there are more opportunities for child-initiated activities and decision making in planning for the Early Years Foundation Stage;
- planning more open-ended opportunities where pupils can take responsibility, make decisions and show initiative for aspects of their learning in lessons across the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Behaviour in lessons is generally good and pupils get on with their tasks, working with concentration and involvement. Pupils are very willing and want to do well. There are good relationships between staff and pupils and this means that pupils are confident to express their ideas or concerns. They collaborate with each other and work well together. Pupils also learn to evaluate their own work and, in one lesson, judged how confident they were in tackling the new task.

Children start nursery with skills and abilities that are broadly typical for their age. Attainment by the end of Year 6 is above average. This represents good progress by pupils over time. The school challenges able pupils well. They make good progress and the proportion of pupils gaining the higher Level 5 in mathematics and English is above the national average. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress, because provision to support these pupils is mapped very carefully to meet their specific needs. The work that is used to support the pupils and its impact is evaluated carefully. Boys and girls perform equally well in lessons. In classes where there are more boys, staff keep a close eye on girls' progress. Pupils at an early stage of learning English make good progress.

The school fosters pupils' self-esteem well and provides good opportunities for pupils to work together in a variety of ways. Cultural development is good. The school makes good use of the rich diversity of cultures within its community. Older pupils display mature attitudes towards each other and have above average academic skills which together provide a strong foundation for the next steps in their education.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Staff have good subject knowledge and are skilled in the way they plan lessons to take learning forward. They make good use of the information technology to make interesting presentations and to involve pupils in learning through the common use of netbooks in Year 6. Essentially, pupils make good progress in lessons because teachers make it very clear what it is that is expected, link back to the prior learning well, there is a positive and encouraging rapport with all adults in the classroom developing pupils' confidence, and there is clear feedback and praise.

There has been a focus on developing staff's skills in assessing pupils' work by using specialised assessment materials and moderating each other's assessments. This means that the staff now have a much more accurate picture of where pupils are in their learning and the information used to monitor pupils' progress is accurate. Marking is good. It generally identifies what the pupil needs to do in order to improve. Pupils know their targets, often couched in the form of success criteria.

Work in personal, social, health education make strong contribution to pupils' personal development. Links between subjects are established and the process of making the curriculum more creative and, to an increasing degree, is personalised. For example, identifying Lewis Hamilton, a local hero, for work on writing for a purpose in one class, also was targeted to inspire more reluctant writers. The school makes good use of theme

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days or special event weeks to extend the curriculum experiences. Enrichment activities are good.

There are good arrangements for pupils to make the transition to secondary school. Extra support is given to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities so the receiving secondary school has full information. The school supports pupils facing particular challenges in their lives very well, enabling them to get back on a learning track, once some of the learning barriers have been tackled successfully. The school has very good links with a speech therapist in particular but also with other specialist links to support individual's needs.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has created a strong team of staff who are proud to be a staff member, feel valued and know what the school is trying to achieve. The senior leadership team is effective. They bring a range of complementary strengths and together have brought about school improvements. The school sets ambitious targets. Leadership in embedding ambition and driving improvement is good. Teaching has also improved since the last inspection because of the work to support staff. Staff are held accountable for the progress of pupils in their classes through pupil progress meetings.

The governing body is good. It provides a clear strategic overview as well as ongoing challenge and takes its responsibilities very seriously. The governing body has a close and effective relationship with staff. They monitor the development of the school improvement plan carefully. They manage the finance well. The governing body wants to work more closely with parents. It has canvassed their views but returns were low. Safeguarding is good. All requirements are fully met and all visitors to the school carefully checked.

The school is highly inclusive in philosophy and faith. It is also a cohesive community where pupils from different backgrounds get on well with each other. The progress of all pupils is monitored carefully to ensure that individuals or groups are not slipping behind. The school has a community cohesion action plan in place and has carried out an audit providing a clear view of where it stands in relation to the local and wider communities. There are good links locally through the Church. Pupils are aware of the diversity of cultures. International links are growing through charity work, links with Haiti and the Church's links and a European Day of Languages. There are strong links with the extended schools network and school's sports partnerships to extend the learning opportunities, particularly in sport.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make satisfactory progress over their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children behave well and show consideration for others. They take turns and use a sand-timer if they have to wait, 'to make it fair'. They respond well to the adults' high expectations and are confident talking to grown-ups. Children in the nursery demonstrated good vocabulary. Adults know the children well and now are making good use of photographs and notes to make informal assessments to plan next steps in learning. The outdoor area and its use have recently been improved. In Reception, the day is very structured with little opportunity for children to make decisions about their learning or to sustain an interest in an activity they have chosen. There is still a strong focus in Reception on completing activities set up by the teacher. For example the whole group looked at 'O' in writing and numbers. The teacher had set up a good range of activities to practise writing 'O' and all children had a short time on each regardless whether they could do the activity or not. The leadership demonstrates satisfactory capacity to take the Early Years Foundation Stage forward, evident in the improvements that have recently taken place. Staff are aware of the need to move to more child-led active learning. They work together, sharing their expertise, well.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

The number of questionnaires returned from parents and carers was broadly average. Almost all parents and carers judged that their children enjoy school and most were happy with their children's experience at the school. The large majority of parents and carers answered all questions positively. A small minority of parents and carers have concerns about the way that the school deals with unacceptable behaviour and a few who have more general concerns including the effectiveness of the school's leadership and management. Inspectors asked the school to improve the information to parents and carers so that they had more information about their children's progress and to clarify some of the misunderstandings about school's policies and practice.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Holy Family Catholic Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 87 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 210 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	55	63	30	34	0	0	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	60	69	25	29	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	29	33	45	52	11	13	2	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	23	26	48	55	12	14	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	29	33	50	57	4	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	28	32	50	57	9	10	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	40	46	46	53	1	1	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	36	41	37	43	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	31	36	46	53	9	10	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	26	30	35	40	20	23	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	25	45	52	15	17	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	27	31	38	44	12	14	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	39	45	41	47	6	7	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



18 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Holy Family Catholic Primary School, Crookhams, Herts, AL7 1PG

Thank you for making me and my colleagues so welcome in your school. We would like to thank those members of the school council and the Year 6 pupils who gave up part of their lunchtime to speak to us. What you had to say was very helpful.

This is a good school. Your skills and abilities at the end of Year 6 are above those generally seen. You make good progress in your work over your time in school. This is because the school ensures that you do a lot of interesting things, staff care about you, give you good support and teachers are skilled. Not only do you achieve well and enjoy learning but your personal development is good. You behave well. The school is a very friendly community and you feel very safe. Your attendance is excellent. We were very impressed how seriously and effectively the peer mediators manage their role. In this role you display considerable maturity, working in partnership closely with staff.

In your questionnaires you told us that the headteacher and senior staff are doing a good job and we agree with you. We have asked your headteacher to work with staff on two things to make the school even better. Firstly, to encourage you to take more responsibility for your learning by ensuring that in lessons you have opportunities to make decisions and use your initiative. Secondly, to improve the information that goes to your parents about your progress and other aspects of school life.

The school has improved since it was last inspected. All of you have a part to play in ensuring that this improvement continues, particularly if you all take every advantage of the many opportunities the school provides and continue to work hard.

Yours sincerely

Roderick Passant

Lead inspector

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