

Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132188
Local Authority	St. Helens
Inspection number	360392
Inspection dates	8–9 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Diane Auton

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	217
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Trevor Critchley
Headteacher	Mrs Kate Barlow
Date of previous school inspection	13 November 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 10 lessons and observed eight teachers in their classrooms. They held meetings with members of the governing body, staff, groups of pupils and parents and carers. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including pupils' progress and attainment data, the school's planning documents, policies, procedures and records. They reviewed information provided by parents and carers in 45 completed questionnaires. They also took into account the views pupils and staff expressed in the questionnaires they returned.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The impact of the school's work on ensuring that pupils progress and attain as well as possible, especially in English.
- How effectively provision builds on pupils' skills from year to year, particularly how successful the school has been in ensuring that the quality of teaching is consistently good or better.
- How effectively leaders and managers are working to ensure that inconsistencies in attainment between English and mathematics are evened out.

Information about the school

This primary school is of average size compared to others of the same type. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion with special educational needs and/or difficulties has increased since the school's last inspection and is now above average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, with a small proportion from other heritages, including Eastern European and Traveller families.

The school has experienced significant changes in staffing since its last inspection. A new headteacher came into post in September 2009; the majority of class teachers, teaching assistants and administrative staff were appointed in the last school year; a learning mentor post was also created. An extensive programme of building improvements and refurbishments took place during the last school year and a new annex building is currently under construction on the school site to accommodate an Early Years Foundation Stage Unit.

Since its last inspection, the school has achieved Healthy School status for the second time and the governing body gained accreditation against the Financial Management Standard in Schools. The school provides a daily breakfast club, which is also open to pupils from a neighbouring school.

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. It serves the needs of its community with dedication and care. Well led, effective practitioners ensure that lessons are planned well to meet the needs of all learners. As a result, pupils enjoy learning and apply themselves well. Their overall progress in learning is good and their attainment, although currently average, is rising.

Most children's skills levels on entry to the nursery are below expectations. They progress well through the school, however, and go on to achieve broadly average standards by the end of Year 6. Good teaching and effective assessment are successfully ironing out most of the remaining inconsistencies between year groups and subjects. Writing is greatly improved, but still correctly identified as a priority subject area. The school has begun to develop a thematic and creative curriculum, with the aim of supporting further an ongoing improvement in pupils' achievement, particularly in writing. This initiative has started promisingly, but is at an early stage.

Although the overall quality of provision is good and evaluated regularly, a small proportion of teaching remains satisfactory rather than good. Careful consideration is given to pupils' welfare and to their development as good citizens. This is seen, for example, in the Peer Listener project, where older pupils provide support for pupils who need a friend to listen to them. Sensitive and effective support is provided for potentially vulnerable pupils, for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and for those with English as their additional language; this enables all to make good progress. The information gained from progress reviews is used well to help plan provision and additional support for individual pupils. Although the Early Years Foundation Stage provides a happy start to children's education, inadequacies in its accommodation have stood in the way of some aspects of the setting's development over time. Staff have worked vigilantly to compensate for this, however, procedures and strategies for assessing children's progress are not yet developed as fully as they could be.

The headteacher has created a strong team ethos, with a clear focus on school improvement. Subject leaders are starting to help to assure the good quality of provision, but their contribution to whole-school curriculum planning is still at an early stage. Self-evaluation is largely accurate, based on systematic monitoring and rigorous assessment. All of this, together with the skills and talents of staff and the very effective leadership of the headteacher, demonstrates that the school has good capacity to continue to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Reinforce the drive to raise standards by:
 - providing a wide range of opportunities through the new creative curriculum for pupils to develop and practise their writing skills through work in other subjects

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- ensuring through rigorous and effective monitoring that teaching is consistently good or better.
- Strengthen the role of subject leaders so that rapid progress may be made in developing a well-planned curriculum, tailored to meet the school's needs.
- Improve the effectiveness of assessment in the Early Years Foundation Stage through developing the role of the key worker.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils' attitudes to school are positive. They show interest in their work in lessons and are responsive learners. They enjoy working with a partner or in a group; this is helping them to develop their thinking and to offer their ideas with confidence. Their concentration and study skills are developing well, they listen carefully in lessons and they see tasks through to completion. Throughout the school, attainment in English was lower than in mathematics during the last school year and the rate of pupils' progress was uneven from one year to the next in both subjects. The school has worked successfully to address these issues. The school's assessment data, evidence seen in lessons and pupils' current work all show that progress is improving rapidly and that attainment is rising well, particularly in writing, as a result of the actions that have been taken. Pupils' overall achievement is now good, with fewer inconsistencies. Pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities and pupils who have English as their additional language all make good progress and achieve well, as a result of the good support the school makes for them.

Pupils show a good understanding of issues around personal safety. They form good relationships with each other and with the adults in school and they say they are confident help is on hand if they encounter any problems. Pupils, parents and carers agree that school is a place of safety. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves healthy and they participate enthusiastically in the increasing number of activities provided to support their health, fitness and well-being. They enjoy taking responsibility, for example, as active school councillors. They are enthusiastic fundraisers for charities at home and abroad. All of this, together with their improving basic skills, contributes to preparing them for the next stages in their education. Pupils show a good understanding of the sound moral values the school promotes and this is reflected in their good behaviour and considerate attitudes. Attendance is in line with the national average.

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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	3
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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
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?

Good teaching is contributing well to pupils' learning and progress and to their personal development. Most lessons are planned well to take the range of learners' needs into account. A small proportion of teaching seen during the inspection was satisfactory, rather than good. This was because the pace of learning was too slow and, as a result, some pupils' progress was not as rapid as it could have been. Most lessons move along briskly, however, and this helps pupils to progress well. Regular assessment means that class teachers have an overview of progress and this is helping them to identify where extra support is needed. Teaching assistants contribute effectively to pupils' learning, especially those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities or who have English as an additional language.

The curriculum is appropriately broad and balanced. The school has, correctly, prioritised English and mathematics in recent times. It has now started to focus on developing pupils' key skills through a themed, creative approach with topics that engage pupils' interests well. However, a clear whole-school strategy for delivering this creative curriculum has yet to be designed. The curriculum is enriched by opportunities for pupils to develop skills in sports and music and to learn a modern foreign language. Projects with visiting artists give good support to developing creative skills. A range of visitors and visits help to promote pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship education. Good teaching and

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support programmes for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities ensure they enjoy full access to learning and are included in everything on offer.

Pastoral care is good and the school works sensitively to support potentially vulnerable pupils and their families. This is helping to break down barriers to learning and progress that some pupils encounter. Strategies to improve attendance have been applied successfully, so that past problems around attendance are now resolved. Good links with the high school benefit pupils at transition. The school collaborates well with a range of agencies that support pupils' health, welfare, social and learning needs. The Breakfast club is well attended and gets the day off to a happy start.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Staff and the governing body share the headteacher's firm commitment to school improvement and her ambition to achieve the best possible outcomes for pupils. Middle leaders contribute increasingly to ensuring the good overall quality of provision and to helping to drive forward improvement initiatives. Subject leaders are now starting to work together to plan the school's new creative curriculum, although this is still at an early stage of development. The well-crafted school improvement plan identifies appropriate actions for raising attainment and increasing progress. Regular reviews give a very clear picture of how much progress pupils are making in reading, writing and mathematics and the school uses this information well to plan the 'next steps'. Although the quality of teaching is monitored regularly, the school is aware of the need for monitoring to be even more rigorous, in order to eliminate the small residue of weaker teaching. The supportive governing body is developing its capacity to hold the school to account.

Parents' and carers' views of the school are mostly positive and they are appreciative of all that is done to support their children's welfare. Effective communications ensure parents and carers are kept well-informed. The school complies well with statutory requirements for safeguarding, health and safety and child protection through well-managed procedures and through ongoing review of their effectiveness. Its inclusive ethos promotes good opportunities for pupils of all backgrounds and abilities to learn and develop well. The school contributes well to community cohesion through a range of partnerships and activities in the community, with the church and parish and through its good links with other local schools.

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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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
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

Most children's skills are below expectations for their age when they enter the nursery. They make satisfactory progress so that, by the end of the Reception Year, they have acquired very positive attitudes and become happy, interested learners. Overall, provision is satisfactory. The quality of teaching is good and children are provided with a good balance between activities they choose for themselves and those led by adults. This supports children's development of independence well. Daily letters and sounds sessions are helping to boost early literacy skills. Assessment is informed by evidence gathered through observations of the children in their activities and staff have begun to use this information to help them plan the next steps in their learning. However, because the role of the key worker is still fairly new, the further development of assessment practice in the setting has been delayed. There are some shortcomings in the quality of the accommodation.

Staff are effective in identifying and supporting children with additional learning needs. Children interact well with each other and enjoy warm, trusting relationships with the caring staff; as a result, they grow in confidence, they are happy and secure and ready to learn. They settle quickly because induction procedures are sensitive and the staff establish the positive relationships with parents and carers that prevail throughout the school. Staff operate effectively within each of the two classes, but premises issues mean that they are not able to work together as a team on a day-to-day basis. Despite the inadequacies of the current accommodation, staff have created a bright and welcoming learning environment in both classes. Procedures to ensure children's welfare are very good and meet all requirements.

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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

Around one fifth of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. Most of those who responded said they agree or strongly agree that they are happy with their children's experience at the school. This is in line with the inspection team's judgement on the school's good overall effectiveness.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Holy Spirit 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 45 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 217 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	22	49	21	47	2	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	27	60	18	40	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	16	36	26	58	2	4	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	18	40	23	51	1	2	3	7
The teaching is good at this school	21	47	20	44	0	0	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	20	44	21	47	3	7	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	42	24	53	0	0	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)	19	42	21	47	3	7	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	19	42	23	51	2	4	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	18	40	21	47	4	9	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	38	23	51	5	11	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	19	42	23	51	3	7	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	23	51	17	38	0	0	3	7

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



10 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School, St Helens, WA9 2JE

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspectors when we visited your school. As you know, we came to see how well the school is doing and how you are all getting on with your learning.

We found that Holy Spirit Catholic Primary is a good school and that it is a happy place for you to learn and grow together. You are well behaved, polite young people. You work hard in your lessons, you enjoy your work and you get on well with each other and with the adults in school. They look after you well. They have been working hard, too, to make sure you are taught well. You are making good progress in your learning and standards are rising rapidly. Keep up the good work! There are still some things to do to help make your school the best school it can possibly be. This is what I have asked the school's leaders to do.

- Keep up the drive to raise standards by making sure that teaching is always good or better and by giving you plenty of opportunities to practise your writing skills when you work in other subjects.
- Carry on developing interesting themes and topics for you to work on; I want the teachers who are in charge of each subject to plan this together for all the classes in the school.
- Improve some of the ways they assess your progress and achievements in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

You can help by continuing to do your best and by continuing to be happy learners.

With my very best wishes for the future,

Yours sincerely

Mrs Diane Auton
Lead inspector

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