

Holy Ghost Catholic Primary School

Nightingale Square, Balham, SW12 8QJ

Inspection dates 24–25 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- In this caring and nurturing school, pupils from all backgrounds develop excellent personal qualities. They are polite, confident and articulate young people, keen on helping others.
- Pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural qualities are developed to a very high standard, and this is reflected in their excellent behaviour.
- The school is popular with parents, pupils and staff alike, and is oversubscribed.
- Behaviour is excellent. Pupils feel safe and happy. They enjoy school and have highly positive attitudes to learning. This is reflected in their high attendance.
- Pupils achieve extremely well during their time at the school. Attainment is well above average. Pupils throughout the school make very strong progress in their learning. This reflects the outstanding quality of teaching over time.
- All groups make similar progress, so that no group falls behind. This reflects teachers’ high expectations of their pupils, and the care they take to match tasks accurately to pupils’ abilities.
- The curriculum is extremely strong, offering pupils the chance to master new skills. Music, the arts and sports are strengths of the curriculum, and pupils leave school as knowledgeable and well-rounded young people.
- Leaders and governors are fully committed to the school and lose no opportunity to work together to drive forward improvement. School leaders have made considerable improvements since the previous inspection. They are astute and exacting in their assessment of the quality of teaching. As a result, key areas of the school’s work, such as pupils’ achievement and the quality of teaching, have improved. The school is in an excellent place to continue to improve.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 18 lessons across a range of subjects, most observed jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read, looked at samples of their work and discussed their learning with them.
- Meetings were held with leaders and managers, pupils, the Chair, Vice-Chair and two other members of the governing body, and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors took account of the views of staff in 14 questionnaires.
- There were 80 responses to Parent View, the online survey of parents and carers. Inspectors considered these, and also spoke to a number of parents during the inspection.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including information on pupils' attainment and progress, safeguarding information, records relating to behaviour and safety, and minutes of meetings of the governing body.

Inspection team

Natalia Power, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Alastair McMeckan

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Holy Ghost is a little smaller than the average primary school.
- A very small proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides schools with additional funding for children looked after by the local authority, for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, and for those with a parent in the armed services. At Holy Ghost, nearly all of the pupils who qualify for the pupil premium do so through eligibility for free school meals.
- Around one third of pupils come from a wide range of minority ethnic heritages, and this proportion is a little higher than usual. An average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action is lower than average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the toys, craft materials and equipment in the Reception class, both in the indoor and outdoor play areas, in order to give the children the best possible opportunities to use their imagination and develop their creativity.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Pupils achieve extremely well. Pupils consistently leave school with results which put them at least a year ahead of the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. They make very strong progress from their starting points. In 2013, for example, one third of the Year 6 leavers made exceptional progress from Year 2 in reading, and half made exceptional progress in writing and mathematics.
- Children enter the Reception class with language, number and social skills which vary but which are typically higher than the levels expected for their age. Through high-quality teaching with a strong focus on improving their speaking and listening skills, they get off to a very good start. However, opportunities to provide them with the most stimulating play equipment are sometimes missed.
- Outstanding teaching ensures that pupils continue to make rapid progress throughout the school. No group lags behind. This reflects the school's commitment to equal opportunities, making sure that all have the chance to succeed.
- Pupils from a wide variety of backgrounds learn exceptionally well. Those who speak English as an additional language receive immediate and highly effective support which enables them quickly to catch up with others and make similarly strong progress.
- The school is highly responsive to the needs of disabled pupils and those with a range of special educational needs, quickly putting in place additional support both within the classroom and in small withdrawal groups. As a result, these pupils also make the very rapid progress that is typical in this school.
- Pupils do extremely well in reading because the school works in close partnership with parents and carers to foster a love of reading. Children in the Reception class are able to piece words together using their knowledge of phonics (sounds and letters). As a result, Year 1 pupils did very well indeed in the 2013 phonics screening check. In the 2013 tests taken at the end of Year 6, three quarters of pupils gained Level 5 in reading and a few gained Level 6, a grade usually expected of teenagers.
- The very few pupils eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium also achieve very well. School leaders and governors know how well each and every one of these pupils is doing, and keep a close eye on how effectively the additional support for them is used. As a result, they make similar progress to all others in the school in reading, writing and mathematics, and there is no appreciable difference between how they are doing and other pupils in the school.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Pupils throughout the school make rapid progress in their learning because of the high overall quality of the teaching. This is evident both from lessons observed and from pupils' workbooks, which show outstanding progress over time.
- Teachers expect a great deal from the pupils, and they respond by doing their best work. Pupils read demanding books and do stimulating and difficult mathematical exercises, and enjoy the challenge very much. One pupil told inspectors, 'We enjoy a challenge where there can be more than one answer. We like being pushed to the limits.' This view met with agreement from all pupils present.
- Questioning is brisk, and the rapid pace keeps pupils alert and interested.
- The tasks are matched highly accurately to individual pupils' needs, so that all groups make rapid progress. For example, in one Year 6 science lesson, pupils were set the challenging task of interpreting graphs matching grass growth with the amount of water received. The task was successfully varied to enable pupils with a range of capabilities to make the best progress they could.
- Much of the teaching has a strong focus on promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural

development. In one Year 5 English lesson, for example, the teacher used atmospheric music and poetic language to explore the idea of a man walking through snow. This evoked some sophisticated and beautiful responses from the pupils. For example, one pupil talked of the man finding a world 'where it was night-time forever'.

- The quality of teaching in the Reception class is strong overall, and the children enjoy learning. For example, in one lesson seen, the class teacher helped a small group of pupils to match sounds and letters. They made rapid progress because of her close attention to their particular needs. Outdoors, a teaching assistant asked a child pouring water down a channel in order to move some balls, whether pouring more water would drive the balls faster. This stimulated the child's scientific curiosity very effectively. Such close communication develops the children's language and thinking skills very well.
- However, some of the play equipment, both indoors and outdoors, is not inviting enough to encourage children to explore and experiment for themselves, and this limits their opportunities to 'pretend' and use their imagination and creativity to the full.
- Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to the learning of pupils, particularly those who have a range of additional needs, helping them individually and in small groups. This enables pupils who are learning English, and those who struggle with their work, to make similar progress to others.
- Marking is thorough, and gives pupils valuable advice on how they can improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils' exemplary behaviour comes in large part from the nurturing and welcoming ethos of the school, where each individual, whether child or adult, is valued. One parent told inspectors, 'The school treasures everything about the children, their progress, their well-being.'
- The excellent behaviour reflects the excellent development of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural qualities, springing from the close links between home, school and Church. As a result, the pupils care about one another and are ready to lend a helping hand. The older pupils love helping the younger ones as 'buddies'. Pupils in Year 3 reported that they were proud to help others at the 'friendship bench'.
- Pupils behave extremely well in lessons and around the school. They are polite and welcoming to visitors. They are courteous to adults, and are considerate to one another. It was a joy to see Year 3 pupils confidently involving parents and carers in a dramatic and musical display of what they had learnt about the ancient Egyptians.
- Pupils are extremely eager to learn, and make an exceptional contribution to their own learning. For example, they were quick to develop the topic of orderliness in one assembly led by the school's chaplain to debate whether a tidy bedroom was really efficient or whether one could find what one wanted more easily if things were left lying around.
- The school is inclusive, and school leaders ensure that there is no discrimination. Parents of pupils with a range of additional needs spoke highly of the school's help for them, because, as one parent commented, 'They love each child.'
- The pupils get on extremely well together. The youngest children in the Reception class are ready to share and take turns, and it was lovely to see how the children cooperated in building bridges and pathways from building blocks.
- Pupils are highly considerate towards one another. They told inspectors that pupils are rarely unkind, and that there is no actual bullying such as racist or cyber-bullying. They reported that, if they have any concerns, they can use the worry boxes or have a word with the 'mini-mentors' or an adult. As a result, they feel completely safe in school.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. They understand, for example, the risks involved in cycling or crossing the road, or communicating with strangers in person and online.
- Almost all parents who responded to the online survey of their views, or who spoke to inspectors, agreed that their children are safe and happy at the school. 99 per cent of parents would recommend the school to others.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Leadership and management are outstanding because school leaders and governors secure the highest standards in teaching and pupils' achievement. The school is happy and harmonious. Staff responses to the questionnaire were completely positive. The headteacher, ably supported by her deputy, is inspirational in her drive for improvement. She has created a strong and supportive team. The school is on an upward path.
- Leaders, governors and managers have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and how to maintain the upward momentum. Their plans for the future are precise, exacting and realistic. Since the previous inspection, when the school was judged to be good, leaders have improved the way pupils' progress is checked, making sure that teachers understand and share in planning for pupils' individual needs. As a result, the school is rigorous in matching tasks to pupils' abilities, and this has enabled all to make very strong progress.
- School leaders have high expectations of the teachers and this has driven up the quality of the teaching, so that it is now outstanding. Leaders visit lessons frequently and provide valuable guidance to teachers on how they can improve their performance. They encourage teachers to continue developing their expertise through courses and in-house training. As a result, pupils' learning and progress are increasingly rapid.
- The school receives helpful support from the local authority, which knows the school well.
- Parents told inspectors of excellent communication between school and home. They feel well informed, and several described the school as a close-knit family. The partnership between school and home makes a valuable contribution to pupils' outstanding learning.
- Leaders and governors keep pupils extremely safe and ensure that those who work with them have been properly checked.
- The curriculum is excellent, and prepares pupils exceptionally well for the next stage of schooling. There are considerable strengths, particularly in the fields of music, art and sport. For example, inspectors enjoyed hearing Year 3 and 4 pupils singing tunefully and with a real understanding of harmony, in a project run by the borough's music service.
- School leaders and governors ensure that the additional funding for promoting sports is used highly effectively to encourage pupils to take part in a wide range of activities outside the school day, and to encourage a healthy spirit of competition with other schools.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is impressive. Governors have an excellent knowledge of all aspects of school life. They are proactive, for example, devising their own code of conduct, which also serves as an introduction to those considering serving on the governing body. They have a sophisticated understanding of how the school is performing in relation to others.
 - Governors have an excellent understanding of the various ways of measuring pupils' achievement, and ask the necessary searching questions of leaders and managers to ensure that all pupils do as well as they can. They visit lessons to assure themselves of the quality of the teaching, and thus see for themselves that, in the words of the Chair, 'The school turns out confident, curious children.'
 - Governors have a clear understanding of the link between teachers' pay and the progress that pupils are making. They are highly aware of their responsibility to spend public money wisely, and by ensuring that pupils make outstanding progress, they get excellent value for money.
 - Governors keep a firm hand on the school's budget. They carefully check the uses to which pupil premium funding is put, making sure that it benefits each individual for whom it is intended. They make good use of the additional primary sports funding to attract new pupils to such sports as swimming.
 - Governors are highly trained and carry out their statutory duties extremely effectively, including safeguarding and ensuring equality of opportunity.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	101036
Local authority	Wandsworth
Inspection number	425607

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	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Bogle
Headteacher	Susan Lawless
Date of previous school inspection	6 November 2008
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