



Holy Rood Catholic Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 126485
Local Authority Swindon
Inspection number 293572
Inspection dates 6–7 February 2007
Reporting inspector Jonathan Palk

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

Type of school	Junior	School address	Upham Road
School category	Community		Swindon
Age range of pupils	7–11		SN3 1DH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01793 527679
Number on roll (school)	272	Fax number	01793 491647
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Richard Twomey
		Headteacher	C Inskip
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
7–11	6–7 February 2007	293572

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Holy Rood Catholic Junior faces some challenging circumstances. In a little over two years, the ethnic background of its pupils has changed and there are now above average numbers of pupils learning English as an additional language. Attainment on entry is average. However, high numbers of pupils join the school other than at the normal time of admission, some of whom come from abroad with no previous experience of school. The range of ability in using English is wide. This rapid and sudden change has coincided with some turnover of teaching staff and three of the eight class teachers are recently appointed. In other respects the school is typical of other junior schools nationally, with average proportions of pupils with special educational needs.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

As one parent neatly summed up, this is a school where 'children flourish in all directions and receive genuine direction and care'. This sentiment was echoed by parents in their letters and by the many pupils who talked with inspectors. The school's effectiveness and value for money it provides are satisfactory because achievement, teaching and learning, although improving rapidly, are satisfactory. However, the school has some strong features. Leadership and management are good. The causes of the underachievement by some pupils are well understood and are being effectively addressed through the strategic development of teaching and provision. The governors are working well with school leaders to manage the sudden and recent change in its population. The school is acutely aware that standards have fallen in the last two years and are now average. Some of this is because the starting point for pupils is lower than in previous years but the school also knows that progress, whilst satisfactory, is uneven. Not enough pupils reached the higher levels in the English national tests because the comprehension skills of those learning English as an additional language are weaker. The measures put in place over the last two years are working well. The school is on track to meet challenging targets in mathematics and science. Many pupils learning English as an additional language and pupils with special educational needs are now making good progress. An excellent team of teaching assistants with high levels of knowledge, including some who are bilingual, combined with additional expertise the school has bought in, has helped accelerate their progress. All pupils have made good gains towards their reading targets but writing is still a weaker aspect of the more able pupils' work. The good quality pastoral care results in pupils' good personal development. Pupils enjoy school and attendance is above average. Teaching and learning include some key strengths that are well embedded. Across the school, good use is made of assessment and tracking information and activities have the right level of challenge for the different abilities. Some teachers overly direct the lesson without finding ways to involve pupils more in their own learning. There is good enrichment within a satisfactory curriculum, which makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. Despite some recent strengthening, the curriculum remains somewhat limited in providing pupils with more opportunities to develop their English skills across all subjects. Initially the school was slow to respond to the changing nature of cohorts but now the clear and analytical monitoring and evaluation of the school's needs, and demonstrably improved teaching and progress indicate that the capacity to make further improvement is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure a consistent and coherent approach to developing literacy skills of those learning English as an additional language through the teaching of all subjects.
- Ensure more opportunity for pupils to develop their independent learning skills in lessons.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Since the well above average standards reached in 2004, standards have declined to be average. This has coincided with a significant change in the nature of cohorts going through the school, with more pupils entering with low levels of English than in previous years. In 2006, 10% of the pupils who took the Year 6 tests had recently arrived in the country. Their progress was impressive in the short time they attended the school. A weakness in comprehension of the subtleties of the English language still holds back a number of more able pupils from reaching higher levels. Achievement is satisfactory. Pupils who join the school other than in Year 3 make good progress because of the way the school supports their learning. An analysis of the school's data and a scrutiny of work from Years 5 and 6 show that less able pupils and those with learning difficulties and disabilities are now making good progress. This is because they are receiving effective support from extra literacy and numeracy programmes. Other pupils make good progress in mathematics because of the emphasis given to problem solving. Progress is good in reading. More able pupils are now making satisfactory progress, because their needs are better recognised. The more able groups in Years 5 and 6 are being challenged more in English now and are back on track, but there are still weaknesses in their writing. This is a less developed aspect of pupils' work across the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils' enthusiasm for school and the pride they have in it are evident in the way they respond to visitors. Pupils have good attitudes; they are keen and eager to learn. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Relationships are very positive, reflecting the pupils' good social development and the high quality care they receive. Those families that come from other countries are really made to feel part of the 'Holy Rood family'. There is good racial harmony, and little bullying or harassment of any kind. Pupils have a well developed appreciation of their own and others' cultures. Their spiritual awareness is good and pupils appreciate the times they have for reflection. Most pupils have good attendance. Pupils' preparation for life after school is enhanced by skills such as teamwork and information and communication technology (ICT). They make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community through fund raising and investing time in helping others at playtimes. Responsibilities are taken seriously; the school council has great respect in the school and takes part in formulating school rules and making improvements. Pupils feel safe in school and have a good awareness of safety. They have a good understanding of why they should adopt a healthy lifestyle and join in enthusiastically in the many after school sports clubs.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Classes are happy, settled and productive because relationships are good and teachers know their pupils well. Pupils respond well to the opportunities to interact and share their ideas with each other and to answer questions. Teachers are expert at using the interactive whiteboards to capture pupils' attention and getting them to think more carefully. The best lessons have the right pace to stretch and challenge more able pupils. However, in some lessons the teachers do all the talking, leaving too little time for pupils to develop their independent learning and speaking skills. This leads to some pupils not doing as well as they could. Well trained teaching assistants make a positive contribution to the progress of pupils just beginning to learn English and of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. There are clear signs teaching is improving. Most aspects of assessment are developing well and the pupils are getting to know their targets. However, lessons other than English are not all geared well enough to extend the vocabulary and understanding of pupils, and this holds back achievement in writing skills.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

There are a number of ways in which the curriculum has been developed in imaginative ways to enrich the lives of the pupils. In particular, time and energy are given to developing swimming skills well beyond the required minimum. The French language pervades the school and the spiritual relevance of learning is brought out at every opportunity. There is a wide variety of thoroughly enjoyed after-school activities. Pupils are given good opportunities to use their ICT skills in a variety of lessons, but there is not the same consistency in the way the use of literacy is included in other subjects. This is a significant area for development to meet the needs of the increasing number of pupils for whom English is an additional language, as well as to provide further opportunities to stretch the more able. Even so, pupils settle well socially because, for example, special days are planned to celebrate the cultural background of pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

There is a very high level of care for pupils. All adults understand the pupils' needs because information is shared effectively. Pupils' personal development, well-being and welfare have a high profile in the school. When pupils were asked what they liked most about the school they said that 'adults and teachers are kind and caring'. This contributes to their progress and enjoyment of school. Child protection procedures are good. The very few bullying incidents are effectively dealt with and pupils know who to go to if they have a problem. They understand that there is 'zero tolerance to

bullying'. Pupils are well supported, advised and guided in their personal and academic development. Teachers mark pupils' work carefully often adding words of guidance and encouragement. This is giving pupils a clear understanding of how to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, senior staff and governors have formed a highly effective team, working to a common purpose that is determinedly tackling the changing nature of the school. The governing body has made some significant appointments that have strengthened the teaching team enabling the school to adapt to meet the wide range of ability in classes. Consequently, provision in lessons is rapidly improving and the school has seen some good progress by groups of pupils since September. There is now an established culture whereby all staff and governors are part of the review and analysis of effectiveness. These practices have been strengthened following changes in the teaching staff and leadership, and are proving effective. The headteacher regularly and accurately evaluates teaching and learning. This is complemented by teachers' and subject leaders' appraisal of learning in lessons, which gives them a better understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. The regular and detailed analysis of pupils' progress gives a good picture of pupils' performances and has led to timely interventions to improve achievement. Governors provide the headteacher with good support and are meticulous in carrying out their duties. They are active in building a community school through their strong links with the Church and parents. In their words, they are 'involved in the pragmatic stuff'.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

- We are writing to tell you about the things we discovered when we visited your school. We really enjoyed spending time with you and all the teachers and adults who help you learn. We felt very well looked after by the way you opened doors for us. Thank you for telling us about all the exciting things you do and showing us the letters that some of you wrote. We know your school provides you with a satisfactory education and we agree with you that there are many good things about your school. We have listed them below:
- You are all involved in making it a 'family' school.
- You care and look after each other very well particularly those who have only just joined you.
- You enjoy school, come happily into lessons and concentrate well.
- We agree that your teachers are 'nice and work hard' and that you 'really respect them'.
- There is plenty of help in lessons when you need it.
- You have a very good range of clubs and sporting activities and you keep healthy.
- Your headteacher leads the school well and she has caring governors. As one of you said, 'She is always happy for you to do things.' She has a good knowledge of you all and has done a lot to help make the learning for you better. Everyone wants to make your school better, so we have asked that:
- there is more chance for you to develop your English skills in your other subjects
- you should have more time in lessons to discuss your ideas with each other to help you with your thinking. We know that your parents like your school because lots of them filled out the questionnaire which showed that they appreciate how well you are looked after. We would like to thank them because it helped us get a good picture of the school.