

Holy Family Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132830
Local Authority	Swindon
Inspection number	294039
Inspection dates	10–11 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Paul Sadler

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 on roll	
School	253
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Terry Ward
Headteacher	Mary Barnard
Date of previous school inspection	27 April 2005
School address	Marlowe Avenue Swindon SN3 2PT
Telephone number	01793 521933
Fax number	01793 521 932

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is of average size and draws pupils, mainly from the Catholic community, from a wide area around East Swindon. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average, as is the proportion at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils receiving free school meals is average, as are the proportions from each of the main ethnic groups.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school which has improved considerably since its last inspection in 2005. Parents and pupils rightly appreciate its strengths. 'The school is preparing our children well for their future lives', is a typical comment from a parent. Children start school with skills and knowledge below the expected levels. In the Foundation Stage they make satisfactory progress, although their skills and knowledge remain below the levels expected when they start Year 1. By the end of Year 2 pupils attain standards that are average in mathematics and reading, and below average in writing. By the end of Year 6 their attainment in English, mathematics and science is broadly in line with national averages. Overall they achieve well and in Year 6 their progress is especially good, particularly in mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make good progress. Pupils' personal development is good, they enjoy school and behave well. The school's Catholic ethos promotes good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and safe. Attendance is below average, mainly due to holidays and family events in term-time, although the school does all it can to improve it.

Teaching is good, especially when teachers make pupils think for themselves. Most lessons involve tasks that make pupils think and work hard, but in a few the tasks are too hard or too easy. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well, both as a teaching aid and by pupils as they learn. Assessment is improving rapidly, but much of the development is recent and as a result targets are not always as precise as they might be. Staff have a good knowledge of the progress of most pupils, but this does not yet extend to all groups such as those at an early stage of learning English. However, the available evidence suggests that these pupils make good progress. The curriculum is satisfactory. There is a good range of activities both in and out of school time, but opportunities to teach skills such as literacy through other subjects are at an early stage of development. Pupils are cared for very well, with good arrangements for child protection. Pupils have a good understanding of national standards and of what they need to do to achieve them. As a result, in spite of a lack of challenge and precision in a few of the targets set, care, guidance and support are good.

Leadership and management are good as successful action has been taken to improve teaching and to raise pupils' standards of attainment, especially in mathematics. The school recognises that similar action is now needed to improve writing. Leaders and managers are effective, knowledgeable and dynamic and there is good capacity to improve further. However, current vacancies are placing the leadership under considerable pressure, and there are signs that this may already be having a detrimental effect on their effectiveness, for example in rapidly developing the curriculum. Leadership in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory but not as strong as elsewhere.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the standard of pupils' writing through more precise use of assessment to plan work.
- Improve leadership and management of the Foundation Stage in order to improve children's rate of progress.
- Bring the leadership team up to full strength in order to make the school even more effective, particularly in improving the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children in the Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress in learning letter formation, the early stages of reading and in counting. In Years 1 and 2 they make good progress, especially in mathematics where most can solve simple problems by the end of Year 2. Their reading skills develop well, reaching national averages, although the proportion reaching the higher levels in writing is small. In Years 3 to 6 pupils continue to make good progress and by the end of Year 6 they attain above average standards in science, and average standards in mathematics which is an improvement on the recent past. In English, they attain average standards in reading and have good verbal skills, but attainment in writing is below average at the highest levels. The school has recognised this and has a good plan to improve matters. Pupils also reach above average standards in subjects such as ICT, history and music. Overall, given that children start school with levels of skill below those expected, their achievement is good.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils behave well and say there is little bullying, and that any that occurs is dealt with effectively. They enjoy school a lot and take part enthusiastically in the wide range of activities. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They have a good knowledge of how to keep healthy and safe and are keen about plans to reopen the school kitchen to provide healthy lunches. They contribute satisfactorily to the school and wider community. The school council meets regularly and is effective, but pupils have fewer opportunities to contribute to the wider community. The development of the skills they will need in later life is good as they make good progress in literacy, numeracy and ICT and have opportunities for collaboration and teamwork. Attendance is below average. The school tries hard to improve it but feels that a few parents are too willing to keep their children off school for reasons other than illness.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good as teachers plan interesting activities and generally have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They use resources well, especially ICT, for example when Year 6 pupils present their work to the class using the interactive whiteboard. Marking is effective and teachers have a good knowledge of their pupils' progress in the current year and are beginning to use this knowledge well to plan future work. Teaching assistants support pupils well, especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, or who are at an early stage of learning English. In a few cases, including in the Foundation Stage, the work does not always meet the needs of all the pupils, such as when they are presented with worksheets they are unable to read.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum includes a good variety of subjects including a modern foreign language and a good range of out-of-school activities. The Foundation Stage curriculum is satisfactory although pupils are not always given the guidance they need to learn effectively. Pupils benefit from a

range of visitors including artists and those connected with the Church. Planning is beginning to identify opportunities for skills such as literacy and ICT to be taught through other subjects such as history, but this is not yet the case in all subjects. In a few areas resources are limited, such as for those learning English as an additional language.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils receive good care, guidance and support because staff know their needs well and have good relationships with parents. Arrangements for child protection meet requirements. Generally, pupils receive good academic guidance. Older pupils in particular have a very good knowledge of national standards and of how they need to improve their work to achieve them. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also receive good guidance. In a few cases, however, targets set for pupils are not sufficiently demanding or precise.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, senior leaders and governors have worked tirelessly and largely successfully to improve the school. They have a good knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses and have successfully raised standards, especially in mathematics. This is because subject leaders are well trained and effective. The impact so far has been greatest in mathematics and science as the English subject leader is a recent appointment. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes have also improved. In other areas, notably the Foundation Stage but also in standards of writing, weaknesses have been recognised but have yet to be rectified. Monitoring and evaluation have been very effective in the most important areas, such as in improving the quality of teaching. However, recent staffing difficulties have given rise to excessive workloads for senior leaders and managers, and they are struggling to maintain the same high degree of effectiveness in areas such as in target-setting and in improving the curriculum.

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Annex A

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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

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	3
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	3
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?	2
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?	2

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.

Annex A

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	2
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

Dear Pupils

Holy Family Catholic Primary School, Swindon, Wiltshire SN3 2PT

We very much enjoyed talking and listening to you and seeing your work when we visited your school recently. We want to thank you for spending time with us. We especially enjoyed seeing your assemblies, with children performing and receiving certificates for your many achievements. Well done!

We agree with your parents and yourselves that yours is a good school. Some important things about it are:

- You make good progress and your results in the Year 6 tests are about average.
- You behave well, enjoy school and say there is little bullying.
- You know a lot about how to keep healthy and safe.
- You do a lot for the school, such as being members of the school council.
- Teaching is good. Teachers set interesting work and make good use of information and communication technology (ICT).
- You have a satisfactory range of subjects and out-of-school activities.
- All the staff look after you well and show you how you can improve your work.
- The headteacher and other staff lead the school well.

There are a few ways in which the school can be improved. The teachers know your writing can improve and we have asked that this is treated as a high priority. We have also asked that some problems about the Foundation Stage, and some staff vacancies, are sorted out quickly so that you all make better progress.

Yours sincerely

Paul Sadler Lead inspector