

Holy Family Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115199
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	311875
Inspection dates	2–3 December 2008
Reporting inspector	George Falconer HMI

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	203
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Sean Bunch
Headteacher	Mrs Ann Kelliher
Date of previous school inspection	23 May 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Maltings Lane Witham Essex CM8 1DX

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	2–3 December 2008
Inspection number	311875

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Age group 4–11

Inspection dates 2–3 December 2008

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Holy Family Catholic Primary School is on the south side of Witham and has a wide catchment area, but with most pupils living in the local vicinity. Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is less than the national average. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is much less than found nationally, as is the percentage of pupils whose first language is not English. The percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is higher than the national average but the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with statements is lower than found nationally. Their needs include autism and speech, language and communication difficulties. The school has gained a number of awards including, Investors in People, Healthy Schools and Activemark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The leadership and management consider the overall effectiveness of the school to be satisfactory. The inspection findings agree but there are also some good qualities such as the dedication of all the staff and the big contribution pupils make to their learning. These are positive contributory factors to the school's onward development since the last inspection and there is a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

Leadership and management are satisfactory and the headteacher realises that work is not yet complete within those areas that are likely to promote even better learning for all pupils. The senior management team are developing their roles and responsibilities well. They acknowledge, though, that they must continue to give full attention to the school's key priorities. Subject co-ordinators are developing their responsibilities appropriately and are working hard to make sure that achievement levels rise across the school for all pupils. The chair of governors is conscientious and does a good job in giving a positive steer to the school. The governing body provides appropriate levels of support in order to enhance provision for pupils. The inspection team was impressed with the relevant qualifications that some of the teaching assistants have and these clearly help them in their roles.

Pupils' interests are at the heart of the school's work with achievement being a key area of the school's focus. Achievement is satisfactory overall. Pupils enter the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) with broadly expected knowledge, skills and understanding in most areas of learning. Pupils have typically made satisfactory progress across the school and reached average standards by the time they leave in Year 6. There has been a rising trend in their attainment over the past three years which is now bearing fruit in Key Stage 1. In the 2008 assessments, Year 2 pupils attained levels above the national average in all subjects. Their achievement was good because of effective teaching but this has not yet spread throughout the school. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 was average overall, representing satisfactory progress from their starting points. This was also the picture seen during the inspection. There is some variation, however, in attainment between different groups of learners and boys do less well than girls in English, especially in Key Stage 2. In the 2008 national tests in English according to the school's data, only girls reached the higher level (Level 5).

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall but there are also good elements of both. Good quality learning goes hand in hand with good quality teaching, both of which were observed during the inspection. The school is now striving to obtain better levels of consistency across the year groups in those important elements of assessment for learning, especially a better match of learning activities for different ability pupils. Marking has improved satisfactorily since the previous inspection, with good practice evident in some books. However, there is still some inconsistency across the school.

The curriculum is good overall including the well thought out curriculum enrichment activities. The school realises the need to fine tune the curriculum further so that it matches all pupils' needs, abilities, and wherever possible, their interests.

The quality of care, guidance and support is satisfactory with good elements of pastoral guidance. Academic guidance is satisfactory with the school continuing the development of its assessment for learning strategy, matching work more accurately for different ability pupils, and the marking strategy.

Personal development and well-being are good and pupils state that they feel safe, happy, and learn to lead healthy lifestyles. The majority of parents are positive about the school and what it has to offer to their children.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children make satisfactory progress by the end of the EYFS. They largely reach the goals expected by the time they leave the Reception class. Health, safety and safeguarding are robust and, as a result, children feel safe. Their personal development is good. They play well together and there are good relationships between adults and children. Those who have difficulties with their learning such as those with speech, language and communication needs, make satisfactory progress. Children play robustly and safely and adopt good hygiene practices. They take responsibility for small tasks such as clearing away at the end of the session. They enjoy school and behaviour is generally good. There are many opportunities for children to make choices. Adults are kind and supportive. However, they tend to take the lead in talk and activities rather than allowing children to take the initiative. Staff plan activities well to help them learn and develop, but the outdoor area is not yet as inviting and stimulating as the school would like it to be, in terms of space for playing and learning. Major building work has only recently been completed. The school has identified this as a priority for development. The school has good links with outside agencies, such as the speech and language therapy service and the educational psychologist, to support those who have difficulty with learning. The introduction of the new framework is in its early stages and has yet to be fully implemented.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure leadership and management continue to develop assessment for learning to provide consistency in understanding of pupils' next steps in learning as well as more focused differentiation that supports pupils' progress as they move through the school.
- Make sure that teaching and learning is at least good throughout the school and that all pupils are challenged in appropriate ways and through appropriate activities, paying particular attention to speaking and listening in the EYFS and English in Key Stage 2 where boys do less well than girls at the higher levels.
- Make sure that the curriculum across the school fully meets all pupils' needs and for children in EYFS, that their learning outdoors is in a stimulating and appealing environment.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

When entering Year 1, levels of personal, social and emotional development and elements of communication, language and literacy are below average for some, but pupils generally make good progress because of the good quality teaching and learning. By the end of Key Stage 1, attainment is now above the national average overall and above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is broadly average and this has been the case for the last three years. This represents satisfactory achievement from their starting points. The 2007 Year 6 national test results demonstrated attainment above the national average in English with broadly average results in mathematics and science. The picture

in 2008 was similar overall but with standards in all three subjects that were broadly average. There are some areas of underperformance for some pupils; more notably boys when compared to the girl's performance in school. This is the case in writing in Key Stage 1 and in English at Key Stage 2. The scores for the higher attainers in English at the end of Key Stage 2 are good compared to the national picture, but 2008 school results do not include boys at this level. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities generally make good progress. This is because they work in small groups with activities that are adapted to their needs, and they are well supported.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Most pupils know the importance of exercise and eating healthily. They are polite and well mannered. They say that they feel safe, bullying is not an issue, and any minor incidents are dealt with effectively by staff. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good; pupils are encouraged to reflect on spiritual issues. There is clear evidence of learning about different religions and cultures such as Divali and Hanukah. They recycle and raise money for charities such as Operation Christmas Child and the local hospice. Most pupils behave well, although there are a few who sometimes demonstrate low level misbehaviour, particularly if lessons lack pace. The very active school council has implemented new playground markings and lobbied for girls to wear trousers to school. The older pupils take responsibility for the younger ones such as acting as reading buddies or organizing playground games as 'play leaders'. Pupils are well prepared for the future. They display sound basic skills in literacy and numeracy, good behaviour and a strong environmental awareness. In addition, they have well-developed financial skills through their organisation of fundraising and charity events. Attendance is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with lessons seen ranging from satisfactory to good. In lessons graded as good, pupils are very interested in their learning and the teaching promotes challenge for pupils at different levels so that most of the pupils are reaching their full potential. Learners are engaged in active learning, enjoy working together, and are aware of the progress they are making. In lessons that are satisfactory, pupils' progress is satisfactory, with some pupils being more engaged than others and, therefore, some pupils make less progress than their peers. The pace of learning is not as brisk and the sense of enjoyment is not as strong.

Assessment for learning and the accurate match of work for individuals are not yet consistently integrated into the planning across the school so that each pupil can reach his or her full potential. Marking is not fully developed in order to encourage and motivate pupils and to positively guide them to their next steps in learning, although satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A good range of relevant experiences contribute to pupils' learning with good curriculum enrichment including music for schools, football, drama and model making. The curriculum

encourages personal development well and is generally well matched to pupils' needs. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is good. A number of interesting visits and visitors help to make learning fun, such as Mad Science and the Seashore Company. Pupils visit a synagogue and a mosque, contributing to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A big emphasis is placed on encouraging pupils to adopt healthy life styles. Pupils develop positive attitudes, enjoy learning and develop key skills. The recent push towards a thematic approach is beginning to help pupils see the links between subjects. There is recognition that this approach is in its early stages and is to be consolidated further before the impact on raising achievement can be measured.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Safeguarding systems are current and regularly updated. There is good support for pupils with speech, language and communication needs as well as those who are autistic. Specific training is in place for teaching assistants to ensure that they are able to work effectively with those pupils. This enables these pupils to achieve well. Pastoral care is good and this is reflected in pupils' sensible behaviour and positive attitudes to school. The school works hard to involve parents; in the Reception class parents are invited in to work with staff on how to support their child in learning to read. Academic support and guidance are a continued focus for improvement. Children are aware that they have targets but some of the younger ones are not clear as to what they need to do to improve. Assessment for learning is developing well but the school realises there is still work to do.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The inspection agrees with the school's own self-evaluation. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall in a school where the headteacher gives appropriate steer and works hard to reach consistency in achievement levels for all pupils. The leadership and management team works well together to gain a clear understanding of the school's needs and they support the staff well. The deputy headteacher has clearly defined responsibilities that are carried out appropriately and the subject leaders have a growing understanding of their areas of responsibility in order to inform good practice across the school. The levels of analysis of the pupils' needs are becoming stronger and developing well.

All staff and governors contribute soundly to the direction of the school. Staff training days are focused on targets for improvement. Teaching and learning has been a main area for development in order to move the achievement levels up for all pupils. Resources, including staff, are deployed satisfactorily to achieve satisfactory value for money across the school's work. Good links exist with external agencies. The governors are committed to the continuing development of the school. The Chair of governors is very conscientious in his role and asks the critical questions that will move the school forward. Community cohesion is a growing element of the school's strategic actions and it is developing well. Holy Family has a satisfactory capacity to improve, based on the degree of success from the previous inspection and the current, developing structures within the school.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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 learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

4 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Holy Family Catholic Primary School, Witham, CM8 1DX

Thank you very much for your help and for all the things you spoke to us about when we came to visit your school. You were very open and friendly, as well as being very polite.

We are impressed with the way in which you can talk to us about the school and your work. Some of you have very clear ideas about the school and how well you are getting on with your learning. You told us that you enjoy coming to school and that it is a good place to be. You feel happy and safe and, generally, everyone gets on well with each other. Many of you like your lessons and quite a few of you know just how well you are doing as well as how you can improve your results. You think that some of your lessons are stimulating and give you good opportunities to develop ideas further. Some lessons are quite exciting like the one using computer control and the buggy. This needs a degree of accuracy and many of you are good at that too. I was impressed by the way in which you are all becoming scientists, as I saw in Year 4.

The results most of you get are improving and the headteacher and governors of the school, along with the staff are pleased with what you do. However, they want to improve your learning even more so that you can all achieve as well as you can in all your lessons. They are going to look very carefully at assessing your learning to tell them what is best for you in the next lessons. They are going to plan very carefully for each of you so that the work you get to do is just the right level for each of you. When books are marked, teachers will be making comments that will encourage you and help you to see how improvements can be made. The headteacher and staff are also going to be looking more closely at the subjects you learn and how they are taught to all of you, boys and girls, so that all of you can reach your full potential.

We think there are many good things about your school, including the enthusiastic and hard working teachers. Finally don't forget that you, yourselves, play a big part in the life of the school and that your ideas really count, especially the ideas you have on how well you are doing and how you can improve.

Best wishes for the future

George Falconer

Her Majesty's Inspector