

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122814
Local Authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	314412
Inspection dates	9–10 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Kenneth Thomas

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)	172
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 Dominic Dixon
Headteacher	Mrs Pat Snowdon
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	Leen Mills Lane Hucknall Nottingham Nottinghamshire NG15 8BZ
Telephone number	0115 953 4577
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Holy Cross is a below average size primary school situated on the north edge of the former mining town of Hucknall. Pupils are drawn from a wide surrounding area and the number on roll is rising. Although the vast majority of pupils are of White British background, there are a few who are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average, as is the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs. There is Early Years Foundation Stage provision for children in the Reception class. The school holds the Investors in People Award, Basic Skills Mark, Healthy School's Gold Award and Active Mark. There is onsite childcare provision that is not managed by the governing body.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This outstanding school meets the diverse needs of its pupils exceptionally well. It has improved significantly since the last inspection and has an excellent capacity to maintain this momentum. Pupils are very proud of their school and are keen participants in the rich opportunities that it provides. They enjoy coming to school and the excellent curriculum is carefully planned to motivate and nurture their enthusiasm for learning. Pupils' attendance is excellent and they make significant contributions to the school and to the wider community. The quality of care and academic guidance is outstanding. One delighted parent, whose views are echoed by many others, commented, 'I would recommend the school to others who want a school with a sense of community, good discipline, kindness and care for one another.'

At the heart of the school's success is the dedication of the headteacher to the maintenance of high standards in all aspects of school life. In this commitment she is strongly supported by staff and governors, and together they provide an education that meets the needs of each individual within a Catholic Christian framework. These shared values influence every aspect of school life, so that pupils feel safe, secure and respected and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils respond whole-heartedly to the many initiatives encouraging them to adopt healthy lifestyles and they leave school exceptionally well prepared for secondary education.

Pupils respond particularly well to the school's high expectations and this creates excellent conditions for learning. Because the school sets and achieves very challenging targets, all groups of pupils make at least good and on occasions outstanding progress from the time they enter the Reception class. The cumulative effect of this is that standards and achievement at the end of Year 6 are high. Teaching is good; at times it is outstanding. When given opportunities to operate as independent and investigative learners, pupils' enthusiasm for learning is harnessed and rapid progress is made. In a few lessons, however, the progress of higher achievers slows because not enough opportunities are provided for these skills to be used in a variety of situations devised by the pupils themselves. The achievement of pupils who find learning difficult is just as high because they are very well supported, both by their teachers and a team of dedicated teaching assistants.

Governors make a significant contribution to the school's excellent leadership and management. Their skills are carefully harnessed and they are accomplished in contributing to the strategic development of the school and holding it to account. The school's view of itself, although rather modest in part, is accurate and helps to sustain its success.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Most children enter Reception with a range of skills that are consistent with expectations for their age. Children settle very quickly into school life, helped by the excellent manner in which children's welfare is promoted. Parents are very positive about the start their children make and many parents refer to the warm, welcoming atmosphere. Staff are adept in building children's confidence. For example, when children hesitate in their replies, staff gently encourage them to find solutions for themselves. The happy and stimulating surroundings help them to develop their personal and social skills extremely well. They share equipment and take turns, developing their concentration and ability to follow through activities. Children achieve well in early

language and reading because there are good opportunities for them to share books and talk about characters and stories. Very good emphasis is given to linking sounds and letters. Similarly, children are encouraged to count out objects and look for patterns when sorting shapes. A clearly defined role play area helps the children to improve their early writing skills, although there is scope to improve this aspect of learning further. There is an appropriate balance of adult led and child initiated activities but sometimes opportunities are missed to extend children's learning by providing more challenging activities, particularly for the more able. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed and plans are in place to develop the indoor and outdoor areas further. Good assessment and record keeping ensure that teachers know the children well. This information, combined with the thoughtful planning of activities, helps children make good progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that in all lessons teachers provide higher achieving pupils with learning opportunities that capitalise on their strengths as independent, inquisitive and highly enthusiastic learners.
- Extend opportunities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to develop their writing skills.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Because children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, their skills on entry to Year 1 exceed expectations. Their good and at times outstanding progress continues through Years 1 and 2 so that pupils reach standards in reading, writing and mathematics which are significantly above average by the time they leave Year 2. The school makes exceptionally good use of its assessment data to track pupils' progress and provide additional support where needed. This support, allied to strong and effective teaching, ensures that good and, in a number of instances, exceptional progress is maintained as pupils move through Years 3 to 6. As a result, the school's very challenging targets are met and standards in English, mathematics and science are consistently high at the end of Year 6. These standards represent outstanding achievement when standards on entry are taken into account. All groups of pupils, including those with particular learning needs, achieve equally well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and speak enthusiastically of what they do in lessons and on their varied educational visits. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and reflected in the respectful, secure, family atmosphere, where pupils play and work well together. Pupils care deeply about the environment, raise funds for charity and contribute eagerly to the school and local community. They take a very active part in school decision making through their school council and have helped develop a playground friendship stop and raise funds for an outdoor classroom. The 'job squad' takes its responsibilities seriously, advertising jobs and interviewing suitable candidates for school roles such as energy monitors and litter pickers. Studies of different religions and cultures prepare pupils very well for life in multicultural Britain. Pupils have an excellent awareness of how to stay healthy and regularly enjoy many sporting activities. They feel very safe in school, say there is no bullying and are happy that 'everyone cares about you enough to sort out any problems you may have'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and at times outstanding. Consistent strengths are excellent relationships and the good management of pupils. Classrooms are very productive places in which pupils willingly try their best. Very competent teaching assistants play a central role in ensuring that pupils with particular learning needs are fully involved in lessons and they make rapid progress as a result. In many lessons, teaching makes full use of pupils' enthusiasm for learning. There is a high level of challenge and imaginative and creative learning tasks fully engage pupils' interest and enthusiasm. In a mixed class of Year 3 and Year 4 pupils, for example, rapid progress was made as the class excitedly calculated fractions using different coloured sweets. However, in a few lessons, the work planned for higher achievers does not capitalise on their enthusiasm and inquisitiveness to fully extend their learning. The thorough marking of pupils' work, particularly in writing, leaves pupils in no doubt what they need to do to improve. This makes a significant contribution to standards.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school has an excellent curriculum that meets the varied needs of pupils exceptionally well, including those who have particular interests and talents as well as those who have specific learning difficulties. Literacy, numeracy, religious education, and information and communication technology are strongly emphasised and there is a comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education. Older pupils are able to learn French. There are opportunities to learn to play an instrument, sing in the choir and take part in local events and concerts. The school has developed valuable partnerships with outside bodies in order to improve the quality and breadth of the curriculum. Pupils say that they enjoy school because you 'learn lots in a fun way' and they are right in their assertion that 'there's even loads to do after school'. In sport, pupils compete very successfully against local schools. The curriculum is further enriched by visiting experts and the school arranges a wide variety of visits, some residential, to enhance pupils' learning and personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school cares exceptionally well for its pupils, with very effective systems in place to safeguard their welfare and promote their personal development and well-being. Due attention is paid to health and safety arrangements, regular risk assessments and staff training. Pastoral support for pupils is outstanding because staff know their pupils very well and react quickly and sensitively to any issues that may arise. Partnerships with external agencies are very effective, ensuring appropriate support is given, particularly to pupils with learning difficulties. Academic guidance is highly effective. Assessment information is used to set improvement targets for individual pupils and they invariably understand what they need to do to improve their work. Teachers use tracking systems very well to ensure that their pupils are making sufficient progress and are quick to provide appropriate catch up programmes where necessary.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and is pivotal in maintaining the school's outstanding overall effectiveness. A strong sense of teamwork, amongst all staff, helps to ensure that this is a very inclusive and orderly community. Systems for self-review are well established and enable staff to pinpoint where improvement is needed. The careful scrutiny of assessment information provides senior leaders with a clear overview of pupils' progress as they move through this school. This enables resources to be allocated where most needed and has a significant impact on standards. All staff, and particularly those new to positions with leadership responsibilities, benefit from continuing professional development that is well planned to support improvement. Governors are highly supportive and provide the school with a considerable amount of expertise. They are challenging and highly effective in their roles as critical friends. The school is forward looking, reaching out into the community, and it promotes community cohesion exceptionally well.

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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?	1
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

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

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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**

11 February 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Holy Cross Catholic Primary School, Hucknall, Nottinghamshire, NG15 8BZ

Following the visit of Mrs Dawes and myself to inspect your school, I am writing to tell you what we found out. Before I do, I would like to say thank you for making us feel so welcome and our visit one that we will remember for a long time. We have told your teachers how you were all so helpful and polite. Through our discussions with you, it was good to hear how much you enjoy school and the many clubs, and other activities that are available for you. We particularly enjoyed listening to your singing in assembly.

We agree with you and your parents that this is an excellent school and one that is helping you to do exceptionally well. Good provision for the youngest children in Reception gives you a flying start in Year 1. We particularly liked the way in which you work hard in your lessons, which are well taught, at times exceptionally well, and enable you to make such good progress. A real help to your teachers is your excellent behaviour because it allows them to concentrate on helping you to learn. Even outstanding schools like yours can get better so we have asked Mrs Snowdon and the teachers to ensure that teaching is always exciting and makes the most of your enthusiasm for learning, and particularly for those of you who sometimes find learning easy. We have also asked staff to extend the writing skills of the children in the Reception class.

All the staff take excellent care of you and work hard to keep you safe and healthy. Mrs Snowdon leads the school exceptionally well and, together with staff and governors, make sure that you have many opportunities at school to develop academically and personally. You are really important players in the school's success and, having met you, we know you will all want to continue to play your part in helping the school to keep its high standards. Through your hard work and the care you show each other, together with your willingness to take on responsibility, you all help to make this such a happy and successful community.

With best wishes for your future success

Dr Kenneth C Thomas

Lead inspector