

Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132188
Local Authority	St. Helens
Inspection number	315958
Inspection date	13 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Geoffrey Yates

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	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	223
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Trevor Critchley
Headteacher	Mr Keith Stanton
Date of previous school inspection	6 May 2003
School address	Brunswick Street Parr St Helens Merseyside WA9 2JE
Telephone number	01744 757727
Fax number	01744 678672

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: whether pupils in Key Stage 1 make the progress they should; the school's efforts to raise attendance levels; and the use of assessment information. Other aspects of the school's work were not inspected in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school is of average size. It serves an area of high socio-economic disadvantage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. There are a small number of looked-after pupils. A well above average number of pupils receive free school meals. The school has won many awards including the Healthy Schools Award. It was closed for a number of days in 2006-07 owing to industrial action.

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 where pupils achieve well. The commitment shown by the staff to make every pupil feel valued is underpinned by the school's Christian ethos. As a result, the care the school provides and pupils' personal development are both of good quality. Pupils get on well with each other and with the adults they come into contact with because of the positive environment the school has created. Parents are very effectively supported by the school. For example, it provides extensive family learning sessions to help them understand how they can help their children. Parents are pleased with the quality of education the school offers. As one parent commented, summing up the views of others, 'My child enjoys going to school; the teachers and headteacher are always happy to discuss any issues.'

Pupils' positive attitudes and the effective teaching and support they receive from teachers and teaching assistants ensures that their achievement is good. Pupils enter Year 1 with skills that are below those typical for their age. Standards in the school's 2007 national tests at the end of Year 6 were broadly average in English, mathematics and science, reflecting good progress and good achievement for these pupils. The targets set for this age group were exceeded and the good progress made has been a major strength in Years 3 to 6 for a number of years.

The 2007 assessments at the end of Year 2 were below average in reading, writing and mathematics, but these results were adversely affected by staffing disruptions last year. The school has taken decisive action to improve standards, which is proving to be successful. Extra teaching support, including Year 1 pupils being taught in small teaching groups to develop basic skills, is helping to raise standards. Pupils in Year 2 are also beginning to make up lost ground. Standards are rising in reading and mathematics, but are not improving in writing. Throughout the school, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and looked-after pupils, are well supported. As a result, they participate fully and make good progress.

Pupils say they like school because, 'It makes you feel happy inside.' However, despite the school's best efforts, attendance is below the national average because families take holidays in term time. Pupils have a good understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle and are very aware of the importance of taking regular exercise. They say they feel very safe and that teachers will help them if they have a problem. School council members enjoy their tasks, take their work seriously and play an important part in the school. For example, they are keen to put their plans into operation to set up and run a healthy tuck shop and are proud of the improvements made to the playgrounds based on their suggestions.

The curriculum is of a good quality and supports pupils' personal development well. It is enhanced by all junior pupils being able to learn German. Moreover, extra-curricular activities such as 'Dance Mania' and community learning projects effectively enrich learning. An important factor in the school's success is the good quality of teaching and learning. Strengths include clear objectives, challenging tasks and the range of techniques used by teachers to help make learning enjoyable. For example, the very well planned, whole-school focus fortnight on 'Our Town,' allowed pupils to develop not only their basic skills, but also important skills in music, art, drama, and information and communication and technology. Some of the painted glasswork produced was of a very good quality and pupils were rightly proud of their achievements. Teachers know their subjects well and have good relationships with pupils. They receive good support from classroom assistants in supporting learning. However, assessment information is not always used as effectively as it might be to ensure that all pupils make consistently good

progress. Staff do not involve pupils effectively in highlighting for themselves what they need to do to improve further.

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher provides effective leadership and is ably supported in this by the deputy headteacher. The newly created leadership team has made a positive start. It is too soon for its work to have had full impact on raising standards, but there are clear signs of improvement already. Some good work has also been done since the difficulties of last year to resolve issues and restore positive relationships. Self-evaluation is accurate and improvement plans identify relevant priorities and areas for development. These factors indicate that the school has good capacity for further improvement. The governing body is well informed and knowledgeable. It supports the school well. The school provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children start school with well below average skills. They settle well into school because of the high quality care and guidance they receive. They make good progress in response to good quality teaching that meets their needs well. However, despite this, children's skills are below those expected for their age at the end of Reception.

Exciting activities, such as those linked to the Antarctic village theme, ensure that learning is exciting and stimulating. Strong emphasis is placed on children's personal development. They are given many valuable opportunities to take responsibility and develop independence. The lack of a readily accessible outside area puts some limitations on children's learning experiences, but the school works to overcome these.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve writing standards in Key Stage 1.
- Ensure that assessment information about pupils' progress is used effectively, and that pupils are involved in the process.
- Raise attendance to broadly average levels.

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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?	2
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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	4
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	3

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?	2
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	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

Inspection of Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School, St Helens, WA9 2JE

What a good school you have! Thank you for making me so welcome when I came to meet you. I enjoyed listening to what you had to say about your school and was pleased to hear how much you enjoy school. The school is working very hard to improve attendance levels, so please help by only being away from school if you are ill. It was great to see the work you had all done as part of your 'Our Town' project and to see how well you all get on together. I agree with you that your teachers are kind and helpful and that they care for you and listen to what you have to say. The school makes sure you are safe and all the staff are really helpful when problems arise.

Whereas pupils in the juniors are doing well in developing their writing skills, I have asked the school to try and improve the writing that pupils in Years 1 and 2 produce. Your school also needs to involve you more in knowing what you need to do to improve. The school has plenty of information about the progress you are making, but needs to make more effective use of it.

Most of all I want you to really try your best at all times and continue to enjoy all the opportunities that your school offers you.

Good luck and very best wishes for your future.