

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100739
Local Authority	Lewisham
Inspection number	323333
Inspection dates	22–23 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Alan Jarvis

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	260
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	50
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Coote
Headteacher	Mrs Pat Peters
Date of previous school inspection	10 July 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Culverley Road Catford London SE6 2LD
Telephone number	020 8698 2675
Fax number	020 8697 7137

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large and very popular school educates pupils from a culturally diverse community. Nearly all are baptised Catholics. The largest groups are from Black African and White British backgrounds. A small proportion are from refugee or asylum-seeker families. Nearly half speak English as an additional language but few are at an early stage of learning to speak English. An above average proportion has learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The majority of these need support for their speech and language difficulties. The school has achieved the Activemark Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Holy Cross is a good school where pupils achieve well. Significant improvements have been made since its last inspection, which reflect its good capacity to improve further. The school plays a pivotal role in the spiritual and community life of the parish. Most parents are very pleased with the school. 'The school is getting better and better', and 'My son thoroughly enjoys school' typify their views.

Good leadership and management have been central to the school's success. The highly effective headteacher, with good support from her senior leadership team, has introduced effective strategies to strengthen pupils' personal and academic progress. Good staff appointments have also boosted improvement.

The improvement is most marked in pupils' personal development, which is now outstanding. This results from the high personal care provided, first-class enrichment of the curriculum, very good support from parents and the school's strong Catholic ethos. Pupils relish every day at school. This is reflected in their outstanding behaviour, attitudes and willingness to join in with all that it offers. Attendance has improved. It is excellent because it is consistently well above average and the rate of persistent absence is nil. Pupils' thoroughly understand how to lead healthy lifestyles because of the greater stress that has been placed on keeping active and eating sensibly. This is recognised in the school's Activemark award. Pupils' very good work habits and very sensible attitudes, together with good levels of basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), prepare them well for their future lives and next stage in education.

Pupils' academic standards and achievement are also much better than at the last inspection. This stems mostly from better monitoring of teaching and the curriculum and the consequent improvements made. Pupils with speech and language difficulties now make good progress because of the more effective support they receive in class and from external support services. Standards in Year 2 have been rising and have typically been above average. Standards in the current Year 2 have fallen back this year and are broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. However, this represents good achievement for this particular group, because they had low starting points when they joined the school. Their good progress stems from the high quality teaching, the very good arrangements to help them settle into Year 1 from Reception, together with a curriculum that is very well tailored to their individual needs. Pupils continue to make good progress overall in Years 3 to 6, although it quickens in classes where teaching is consistently good. The pupils currently in Year 6 are well on track to reach above average standards in English, mathematics and science before they leave. Standards in reading and the progress pupils make in this are impressive throughout the school. Improvements to the curriculum have helped to raise standards in writing, mathematics and science and bring them closer to those in reading. The school has plans to narrow the gap further. This is further evidence that successes are not short-lived and improvement plans are working well.

Leaders and managers have also strengthened the way in which they accurately assess pupils' standards and track their progress term by term. Managers use the information well to provide good support for any pupil who is falling behind. However, they are aware that some teachers are not rigorous enough in using this information to maximise pupils' progress in all year groups, and that the academic guidance given to individual pupils is not sharp enough.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management ensure that children make a good start in the Nursery and Reception because of the welcoming atmosphere and well-established induction routines. Parents appreciate the strong links with staff and the good-quality information they receive. Children make at least good progress in their learning and personal development. When they enter the Nursery, their skills and abilities are generally at the level expected for their age, although this varies year by year. By the time they enter Year 1, the majority children are beginning to reach higher than expected levels for their age. There is a good balance between activities directed by the teachers, which are particularly effective, and those initiated by children. Learning is planned for well in the stimulating outdoor learning area. This encourages independence in an environment with high levels of care in which children feel safe and secure. Several improvements have been made with the support of the whole school leadership team, such as the more rigorous tracking of children's progress and identifying how the curriculum needs to be further improved. As a result, adults tailor the activities given to each class well so that they suit the changing needs of each intake. However, adults sometimes miss opportunities to extend children's language and do not consistently challenge them when they choose their own activities. This sometimes slows the pace of learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate pupils' progress by ensuring that leaders and managers sharpen the academic guidance and support teachers give to pupils.
- Ensure that adults in the Early Years Foundation Stage provide more challenge to children when they choose their own activities to quicken the pace of learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are on an underlying upward trend and achievement is good overall. Typically, pupils make rapid gains in Key Stage 1 and standards are above average in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. Standards in the current Year 2 are not as high because their starting point was lower, but outstanding teaching has sustained their rapid progress. By the end of Year 6 pupils make good progress in English, mathematics and science and their overall standards are above average. The improved standards seen at Key Stage 2 are the result of effective teaching and the improved tracking of pupils' progress. Pupils achieve well regardless of their gender or ethnicity. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress and often reach the nationally expected levels by the time they reach Year 6. This is because of the effective additional support they receive from well-trained teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils say how much they enjoy school. One parent wrote, 'Our child loves going to school and looks forward to Monday to Friday.' Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding because of the high-quality assemblies and very strong personal and social education programme. For example, in one class assembly pupils and their parents were moved by the dramatic and musical presentation of the 'Good Samaritan' story, in which pupils translated the moral dilemma into life in school and on the street. Their cultural development is good as pupils' understanding

of life across our country and wider afield is a little less developed than that of their immediate environment. They are considerate to each other, listen intently to what others are saying and are respectful of other people's views. They adopt very healthy lifestyles and are extremely keen to participate in the many clubs and sporting activities such as basketball. Even the very youngest children know that 'we eat fruit to give us energy at playtime'. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to develop a sense of responsibility, for example the peer mediators who are on duty during lunchtime. Pupils are very aware of personal, group and internet safety and say, 'We know there are stranger dangers but there are also many kind people who would help us if we were in trouble.' Pupils spoke of how the new 'Good to be Green' policy on behaviour enables them to be more responsible and has improved attitudes and behaviour, which now are excellent.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching has improved because leaders and managers have monitored teaching and learning well. Teachers have acted positively on the advice they have received. Typically, lessons are well prepared and organised well, and good-quality resources help to provide varied and interesting learning activities. Behaviour management is consistently good. Teaching and learning are of high quality in Years 1 and 2. This is because teachers tailor lessons and the resources used extremely well to pupils' ages and learning needs. Teaching and learning in Years 3 to 6 are not as precise in all the classes. In particular, the rigour with which teachers ensure that all groups of pupils are fully challenged varies across the ability range and this sometimes slows learning. As one girl said, 'I sometimes feel the work is too easy for me and I could do even better.'

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils speak very positively about improvements they have seen in the curriculum such as more practical learning and investigations in mathematics and science, and the more interesting topic work such as 'Good to be a Londoner'. There is an impressive range of popular clubs and enrichment activities such as girls' football, art, chess and a thriving choir and orchestra. Residential trips are highlights of the year. Recent improvements in teaching reading have promoted a love of books with increased rates of progress. Planning ensures that pupils access computers and develop their skills in ICT well. Teachers make effective use of links between subjects so children understand how learning can be used in everyday life. For example, Year 3 developed their persuasive writing skills by writing letters about saving energy to the Prime Minister, whose office praised their work. In some lessons further excitement in learning is created through role play and high levels of collaboration and stimulus, but in others this is not as good.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are cared for extremely well. They say, 'No matter how small our worry someone in school will always sort it out.' Rigorous procedures are in place to safeguard pupils and ensure their health and safety. There are effective links with all the agencies that can be used to meet all

pupils' needs, promoting equality of access. Some teachers use marking well, in conjunction with the targets that they set for individual pupils, to pinpoint what pupils do well and what needs to be better. However, inconsistencies in practice mean that pupils' progress is sometimes limited. This is because they do not always know what to do to meet their targets or tackle as their next steps in learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school has developed a strong, coherent, senior leadership team. Good teamwork supports the headteacher's clear vision for the direction of the school. Most middle managers, for example subject leaders, are well involved in rigorously monitoring the quality and performance of their areas. However, in one or two subjects, leaders are still being trained to develop incisive monitoring skills. Governors have improved their expertise and good training has helped them develop a better understanding of the role. As a result, they effectively challenge and question the school about its performance and how well improvements are being implemented. The school has a good commitment to community cohesion, succeeds well in helping pupils to contribute to the school's harmonious and cohesive community and has clear plans to further raise pupils' awareness of the wider world in which they live. Collaborative links have been developed with local schools that are having an effective impact on staff training.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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?	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	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?	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

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 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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

03 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Holy Cross Catholic Primary School, London, SE6 2LD

Thank you for welcoming the inspectors to your school recently. We are grateful for the help you gave by talking to us, showing us your work and explaining to us what you really like about your school. We were able to see that yours is a good school.

We found out that your school has been getting better year by year. Your standards are above average when you leave Year 6. This means that you make good progress from your starting points. This is because the school plans your learning well and lessons are good. In your school standards in reading are impressive. Your teachers know that they need to help you to reach equally impressive standards in writing, mathematics and science. To do this we have asked them to make sure that they make it much clearer to you exactly what you need to improve through marking and the targets they set for you. You can help by thinking carefully what you can do well and what you really need to do to improve.

One of the very best things about your school is the way that you are growing up. The adults cherish you and care for you extremely well. Some of you told us that 'someone will always sort any worries you have very quickly'. We could see that you relish coming to school. You show this by your excellent attendance and behaviour, positive spirit and willingness to work hard. You told us how much you enjoyed the many clubs you can attend and we could see how these help you to develop new interests and develop into mature young people. You get on with each other very well. All of this helps your teachers a great deal. It is an important reason why you do so well in your learning and why your school is such a happy place.

We have asked the school to do one more thing. This is for adults to help children learn faster in the Nursery and Reception classes, especially when the children choose the activities themselves.

Your headteacher really knows how to make your school even better. All of the other adults are helping her to keep the improvements going. Well done to you all and very best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Dr Alan Jarvis

Lead Inspector