

Corpus Christi Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104814
Local Authority	St Helens
Inspection number	324110
Inspection dates	26–27 March 2009
Reporting inspector	John Dunne

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)	173
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 Ian Ashton
Headteacher	Mrs Joyce Cottrell
Date of previous school inspection	26 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Old Lane Rainford St Helens Merseyside WA11 8JF

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	26–27 March 2009
Inspection number	324110

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Pupils at this smaller than average sized school come from an area of relative prosperity. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is very low as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is much lower than average. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. There is Early Years Foundation Stage provision in the combined Nursery and Reception class. A before- and after-school club is based in the school hall. The school has received a number of awards including Investors in People, Basic Skills Quality Mark, Kitemark for Early Years and the Activemark.

There has been a recent change of headteacher.

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. Central to this success, is the excellent leadership and drive of the acting headteacher who has recently been appointed to the permanent post. She has united all staff to collaborate effectively with a shared vision for raising standards. Pupils display very positive attitudes to learning and play an important part in the success of the school. Pupils enjoy school immensely and parents are equally positive, with 'what a great start this school is for education' and 'both my children have been given outstanding care' typical of the comments made by many.

During 2008, the assistant headteacher became the acting headteacher without additional staff being appointed to fill the gap. Consequently, a number of staff were fulfilling additional roles. Despite this, standards which had dipped sharply in 2007, rose in 2008 and have continued to rise. Pupils currently in Key Stages 1 and 2, who joined the school with broadly average standards, are now making good progress and by the end of Year 6, standards are above average. Pupils' standards in mathematics are not as high as those in English and science. Nonetheless, underachievement of the most able pupils in mathematics has been dealt with effectively because teachers now plan lessons which include a range of tasks, so that all pupils are challenged.

Leaders and managers effectively identified weaker aspects of learning and successfully prioritised and implemented actions to bring about improvement. Weaknesses in writing have now been remedied as a result of changes to the curriculum, which now provides greater opportunities for pupils to extend their writing. Due to the effective systems that closely monitor pupils' progress, underachievement is swiftly identified and remedied. Teachers have had to improve their skills to enable these systems to be effective. They speak highly of the way that they have been offered training and supported in their professional development. As a result, the quality of teaching is consistently good throughout the school.

Outstanding care and welfare ensure that all pupils are safe and, because relationships and behaviour are excellent, pupils greatly enjoy their education, free from any fear of verbal or physical aggression. Their enjoyment is enhanced by the way in which they are encouraged to become independent learners in lessons that are planned around interesting themes and activities. For example, all study Spanish. Pupils told inspectors about how much they enjoyed speaking the language when, acting as Spanish chefs and waiters, they cooked and served food in the 'Viva Espana theme week. Swimming lessons, two hours of physical education for all, and nutritious food choices contribute to pupils adopting healthy life styles. Pupils make a strong contribution to their school community. For example, all in Year 6 are trained as activity leaders. They provide games and activities for younger pupils and many become monitors and prefects. The choir visits to local clinics and charitable support for a local hospice are examples of pupils' good contribution to the local community. Pupils develop good literacy, numeracy and computing skills and this contributes well to their good economic well-being.

The impact of school leaders and governors in improving attendance, teaching and learning, and standards gives the school a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children start school with skills that are broadly typical for their age. They make good progress through the Nursery and Reception Years and most enter Year 1 with confidence and with skills which are at or above the expected levels in all areas of learning. They are working securely within the goals expected in their personal and emotional development, levels of language and literacy and their mathematical development. This good progress is made as a result of the good teaching and support they receive. Good induction procedures ensure that children settle happily, adapt well to routines and quickly gain independence. They are well cared for in a secure learning environment, show good attitudes to learning and behave well. The children enjoy the many practical and stimulating activities provided. Good emphasis is placed on the development of their communication skills and activities are structured well to cater for the differing needs of the children within the setting. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed. All the adults form a closely knit team who work and plan effectively together. An example of this is the way in which staff are given time to record their observations of children's progress in children's personal diaries which are shared with parents well. The children have continuous access to a wide range of outside activities, which cover all the areas of learning. However, the layout of the outdoor play areas makes it difficult for staff to monitor the children and this limits the effective use of these spaces.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in mathematics to equal those in English and science.
- Improve the layout of the outdoor provision for children in Nursery and Reception so that it can be used more effectively to promote learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average and pupils' achievement is good. Pupils now start Year 1 with skills above those expected, due to the recently improved provision in Nursery and Reception. However, those pupils currently in Key Stages 1 and 2 entered Year 1 with skills that were broadly average. Although progress made by pupils in Key Stage 1 has been weaker in the past, the school recognised that aspects of the curriculum needed improving, so that opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills further were increased. As a result, effective steps have been taken and pupils' standards in Key Stage 1 are now above average. This represents good progress from their starting points. This good progress continues throughout Key Stage 2, where standards in English, mathematics and science are now above average. Achievement in reading is particularly strong throughout both Key Stages. However, although pupils in Year 6 currently are doing much better in mathematics than those who took the 2008 Year 6 national tests, they are still not attaining as highly as they are in English and science.

The school sets challenging targets and most pupils achieve them. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also achieve well because of the way teachers and teaching assistants modify lessons for them and provide opportunities for small group work. The small number of pupils from ethnic minorities and those who speak English as an additional language also make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Spiritual and moral development is outstanding due to the moving and thought provoking assemblies and frequent opportunities for reflection. Pupils learn very effectively how to show concern and respect for others and about cultural and social diversity through well planned lessons and the effective use of outside agencies. As a result, their social development and understanding of other cultures is also outstanding. Pupils show high levels of enjoyment and enthusiasm in all they undertake. They form excellent relationships, demonstrate very high levels of self-confidence and their behaviour is exemplary. They make a particularly strong contribution to the school community with their positive attitudes, respect for each other and the manner in which they discharge the responsibilities they undertake. This was exemplified very well in the exceptional way in which Year 2 pupils looked after children from Reception when they toured a science fair put on by pupils in Year 5. Pupils are confident that the school is a safe place and have considerable trust in the staff. Pupils' understanding of healthy lifestyles is promoted well through good provision for physical activity and the healthy food provided. For example, in the autumn term there is a daily 'wake up and shake up' session and the school participates in the national fruit scheme. Much hard work has been undertaken to improve attendance which is now above average. Pupils develop their basic skills well and are learning to be good citizens which contributes to their good economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good. Teachers make sure that pupils understand what they need to learn and set interesting tasks that pupils greatly enjoy. Pupils and teachers have a good understanding of what has been learned and the areas in which pupils need to improve. Teachers plan lessons well so that learners of all abilities are given different tasks and so all are well challenged. Pupils with particular gaps in their understanding are rapidly identified and underachievement is dealt with promptly. Pupils with specific learning needs receive well targeted support from teaching assistants and others and because of this underachievement is remedied effectively. Consequently, learners of all abilities, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the most able, make good progress.

The quality of teaching in English and mathematics has improved, but pupils' learning in mathematics is not as strong as it is in reading, and in particular in writing, which has improved significantly throughout the school. Pupils' ability to work independently and collaboratively is extremely well developed and this makes a strong contribution towards their outstanding personal development. Improved opportunities for speaking and listening represent a key factor as to why pupils are making good progress. Relationships between adults and pupils and attitudes to learning are good in all lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The improvements made to the curriculum recently have contributed a great deal to the improvement in standards and pupils' outstanding personal development. The curriculum meets

all statutory requirements. Teachers have worked hard in their planning and collaborated effectively to ensure that all subjects are improving pupils' opportunities to write and explore language in greater detail. All lessons are planned around half termly themes, for example, 'horrible history' and 'super sports'. These culminate in enrichment activities which ensure that pupils really enjoy their learning and increase their motivation to learn. For example, Year 5 pupils planned and staged a science fair, where pupils from other year groups took delight in learning from their peers about a wide range of topics, including magnetism, electrical circuits and animal habitats. Computers are used well both by teachers and pupils to add variety and interest and to enliven teaching through animations and games. The school recognises that there is still some way to go to fully embed these examples of very good practice throughout the curriculum. A wide range of extra-curricular activities and trips are well attended and pupils with sporting talents participate successfully in local and national events.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The outstanding quality of pastoral care has a significantly positive impact on pupils' all-round development and achievement. It builds on the excellent relationships that exist in the school. Exemplary arrangements are in place to ensure pupils are safe. Safeguarding arrangements fully meet current government requirements. Any elements of bullying or racism are extremely rare and pupils have absolute confidence that, should they occur, they would be resolved swiftly. A very close watch is kept on potentially vulnerable pupils, drawing effectively on links with outside agencies where appropriate and this ensures that these pupils' needs are provided for extremely well. A firm stance in relation to holidays in term time has been particularly successful in reducing absence. Pupils are fully aware of their targets and very clear about what they need to do to improve, particularly in English and mathematics. Frequent and helpful marking of pupils' work ensures that they are well informed of their next steps in learning. The school has very effective and well-understood procedures for checking on pupils' progress. This information is used very well to identify pupils who may be falling behind in their work and to structure extra support where appropriate.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Following a period of significant instability in staffing at senior level, which had a detrimental effect upon achievement, governors sought to appoint a headteacher with the skills to reverse the decline in standards. The acting, and now recently appointed, headteacher has demonstrated exceptional skills in prioritising what needed to be tackled. With good support from all staff, she has put in place an effective set of measures which are bringing about rapid improvement. Her clear vision and clarity of thought about what needs to be done are now unanimously shared by all staff, who appreciate the support they have been given to successfully adapt to the pace of change. As a result, the school has made a good recovery from the dip in standards in 2007 and pupils are now achieving well.

Because it is a small school, only the assistant headteacher holds a paid post of responsibility. However, all teachers value the way they are being empowered to become collaborative managers, working in teams. They are becoming increasingly effective in bringing about changes which are raising standards. Because they have had good quality training, all teachers now use the effective monitoring systems to check on pupils' progress well.

The headteacher is ably supported by the assistant headteacher and the overwhelming majority of parents hold the leaders and managers of the school in high regard. The school has successfully analysed local needs and is using this effectively to promote good community cohesion within the school and within the local community. The school is successfully promoting equality of opportunity and eliminating discrimination and as a result, all groups of learners are making good progress. Governance is good. This is because governors hold the school to account, making regular checks against very clear improvement plans, which provide them with an accurate picture of how well the school is doing and what needs developing further.

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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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
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?	1

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

I am writing on behalf of the inspectors who inspected your school recently. We greatly enjoyed meeting you. Thank you for the extremely warm welcome you gave us.

We have judged that yours is a good school.

You have a good start in Nursery and Reception, and you achieve well throughout the school. Your teachers make your lessons interesting and give you good advice so that you know how to improve your work. You have good opportunities to think for yourselves and are given responsibility. Because of this, you are growing up to be very sensible young people with a lot of self-confidence. Nearly all of you attend well and come to school on time. You behave outstandingly well and are kind to one another in lessons and in the playground. Everyone in the school cares for you and looks after you outstandingly well. The school is a very safe place for you.

Your new headteacher, all staff and governors have improved the school and are doing a good job. They are planning even more exciting improvements.

I have asked the staff to make sure you do as well in mathematics as you do in English and science. I have also asked them to improve the layout of the outdoor play space for those of you in Nursery and Reception.

All the best for the future!