

Holy Family Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104915
Local Authority	Sefton
Inspection number	324129
Inspection dates	25–26 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Allan Torr HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.
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)	210
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Hibbitt
Headteacher	Mrs Ann Quinn
Date of previous school inspection	May 2006
School address	Norwood Crescent Southport Merseyside PR9 7DU
Telephone number	01704 213084
Fax number	01704 211951
Email address	admin.HolyFamilyPrimary@schools.sefton.gov.uk

Age group	4–11
Inspection date(s)	25–26 February 2009
Inspection number	324129

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out at no notice by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector. The inspectors visited 13 lessons, and held meetings with two governors, most of the staff and with a representative of the local authority. In addition to speaking to pupils on the school council, inspectors met and talked with other pupils in and around the school. They observed the school's work, and looked at 30 completed parent questionnaires and school documentation, and examined pupils' work.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- pupils' attainment and progress in writing; and the attainment and progress of different groups of pupils
- the extent to which the school promotes community cohesion
- the quality of teaching and learning, in particular whether it has improved since the previous inspection
- the quality and effectiveness of governance.

Information about the school

Holy Family is an average sized primary school. A lower than average proportion of pupils is eligible to take a free school meal. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below the national average. A few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above the national average. There are very few pupils with a statement of special educational needs. The school provides for a small number of pupils who are looked after by the local authority. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of a Reception class. Children join the school from approximately ten different pre-school settings. The school hosts a privately run before and after school club. This was subject to a separate inspection, which ran concurrently with this inspection.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Holy Family is a good school. It is a welcoming, vibrant environment in which all pupils, regardless of their needs or their backgrounds are treated equally and are able to thrive. This was encapsulated in the response to the Ofsted questionnaire by a parent who stated 'the school strives to provide a safe, secure and welcoming environment. Every teacher knows every child's name, and it feels like an extension of your own family'. A particular strength is the excellent support, care and guidance that Holy Family offers pupils. Any barriers to learning are identified early, and support is put in place to enable each child to overcome those barriers to ensure they succeed. This, along with good teaching, enables all groups of pupils to achieve well. Of particular note is the success the school has in enabling particular pupil groups, such as those with a learning difficulty and/or disability, to achieve as well as, and in some cases better than, their peers. Pupils enter Year 1 with broadly average skills and knowledge. Standards are average at the end of Year 2. By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment is above average, particularly in mathematics and science. Attainment in writing is around the national average but lags behind other aspects of English. Taken overall, pupils make good progress during their time at Holy Family.

The curriculum meets pupils' needs and is in the process of being improved to make it more creative, meaningful and interesting for pupils. Greater links are being forged between subjects and pupils are having greater influence on what they are learning.

Senior and middle leaders are highly motivated. They have a clear and concise vision for the school which is well understood by all staff. They have an outstanding ability to identify areas of relative weakness and to drive forward change with a track record of sustained improvement over time. Issues for improvement from the previous inspection have been effectively tackled. For example, action to improve the quality of teaching has resulted in improvements throughout the school. Senior and middle leaders have an excellent track record of promoting equality and tackling discrimination. As a result, no group of pupils underachieves or is omitted from any activity that the school provides. Senior leaders are supported well by governors. Two governors interviewed as part of the inspection, possess a clear view of the school's strengths and the areas it needs to develop. Governance, however, is satisfactory overall. Despite some strengths, some aspects of the governing body's

statutory duties are not frequently or regularly reviewed. For example not enough is done to evaluate the school's strategy to promote community cohesion, to monitor electrical tests, and to ensure all risk assessment are fully complete.

The views of governors, parents, the local authority, pupils and staff are all taken into account during the rigorous self-evaluation process. Improvement plans tackle identified priorities and clearly evaluate the impact of actions. The school demonstrates good capacity for sustained improvement and good value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase attainment in writing before the next inspection by:
 - increasing the proportion of pupils attaining the expected Level 4 to over 80%
 - increasing the proportion attaining Level 5 to over 30%
 - improving the opportunities for all children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to develop their writing skills in meaningful tasks linked to the focus of the lesson.

- Develop the curriculum further through:
 - planning activities that enthuse and motivate learners
 - devising tasks that enable pupils to increase their writing skills in subjects other than English

- Sharpen governors' monitoring of how well statutory duties are met by:
 - regularly evaluating the impact of the school's strategy to promote community cohesion
 - ensuring all risk assessments are in place and reviewed regularly
 - ensure all electrical and other checks are undertaken and recorded systematically.

How good is the overall outcome for individuals and groups of pupils?

2

Pupils achieve well and enjoy their learning. Pupils respond particularly well when tasks are interesting and they can see a practical application to what they are learning. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are guided and taught effectively. For instance, regular, frequent and well targeted teaching for individuals and small groups raises the pupils' self-esteem, confidence and their skills. This also enables pupils who are looked after by the local authority, pupils from white and minority ethnic backgrounds, and pupils eligible to receive a free school meal to make good progress. Current and past national assessments show that, against almost all measure these groups of pupils attain better than similar pupils nationally and very close to other groups within the school.

Most pupils attain standards that are either in line with, or exceed, national averages by the end of Key Stage 2. This is particularly the case in mathematics and science.

For the last three years, for example, over 90% of pupils have attained the expected Level 4 and in the last two years over 45% attained higher levels. In English, standards in reading are above average, but standards in writing are average. Evidence from lessons and from pupils' work indicates that attainment in history, music, Spanish, and physical education is above average and progress good. Attainment and progress are average in other foundation subjects such as geography and art.

Overall, pupils behave well in and out of lessons. They understand the rules and have a clear awareness of what is right and wrong. They feel very safe, and those interviewed were adamant that there was no intimidation, harassment or bullying. They are very aware that they are not allowed into the nearby woodland and they are very aware of hazards around them, for example those associated with the building work in the grounds. Pupils have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy diet and lifestyle. They are active and are involved with creative play at break times. School meals are nutritious and well balanced, and there has been a large increase in uptake over the last three years. Pupils make a good contribution to school life. Pupils are involved as reading buddies; language buddies for pupils who speak English as an additional language; and as play leaders. The school council is active, meets frequently and is beginning to influence the direction of the school. Councillors are involved, for example, with staff interviews and setting questions for a pupil questionnaire. In the wider community, pupils work well to raise money for charitable causes and thoroughly enjoy participating with local residents, parents and with pupils from other schools on various projects. For example, pupils join with pupils of other schools to form a joint choir and perform in the parish as well as to other groups. The standards reached by pupils in lessons, their satisfactory attendance, and their development of good attitudes to work means they are prepared well for their transition to secondary education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	1
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	2
Pupils' attendance	3
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	2

¹ Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

The quality of the school's work

At the heart of the good teaching are the strong relationship between staff and pupils and the constant drive to ensure individuals and groups are catered for well. Learning is brisk, because teachers make good use of resources including information and communication technology and make good use of short, targeted activities to keep learning active. This also keeps the atmosphere purposeful and productive. In some subjects, for example, history, pupils' work shows high levels of research, and meaningful links to other subjects, such as mathematics and English. In one example, pupils were solving problems in mathematics based on years and dates from Tudor England. In some of the work seen, learning was more pedestrian, and there were not enough opportunities for pupils to use and extend their key skills, for example, writing. In some of the work scrutinised, for example in geography, pupils merely coloured in and completed worksheets or copied text. Such exercises limit pupils development of their geographical and other skills, such as writing.

Teachers make frequent and regular assessments of pupils' learning. These are used well to influence the planning of future lessons and to set targets for pupils. Teachers' marking and feedback to pupils is good. In the best cases, teachers refer to pupils' individual targets and give feedback to show if they have met them or not. In lessons, older pupils benefit from teachers using effective questioning strategies that reinforce previous learning and that enable pupils to explain their different methods and strategies. In one excellent example, a teacher gauged a pupil was unsure of a particular method in mathematics. She enabled the class to talk in pairs to discuss the method and to clarify their thinking. This was then followed up to ensure that this pupil, and others, fully understood the method before moving onto the next part of the lesson. The school uses the results from school-based and national tests assessments to gauge how much progress pupils are making over time. This is then used by teachers. Most activities are well pitched to different groups of learners to enable them to make progress at their own level. In a small number of cases, activities and the curriculum are not as challenging as they could be.

The curriculum is good. It meets pupils' needs and is enriched by a host of exciting experiences and theme days. There is good provision for Spanish in lessons and consolidation of the language by teachers during other parts of the day, and there are developing links with a school in Mexico. The school is aware of the virtually mono-cultural nature of the local community and utilises the curriculum well to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding of other ethnic groups, cultures and faiths. The school has begun to make links between subjects to make the curriculum more coherent and motivating for pupils.

Support, guidance and care is outstanding and underpins pupils' learning. It is a warm and supportive atmosphere where pupils thrive and gain in confidence through the school. Partnerships with other agencies such as the local authority, education welfare, other schools and the parish benefit pupils and help raise achievement.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	2
Effective assessment	2
An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	2
Support, guidance and care	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders and governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and an excellent understanding of what it needs to do to improve further. At the heart of the school's decision making lies a determined drive to ensure every pupil in Holy Family succeeds. Actions within the school improvement plan are related directly to improving outcomes for pupils and evolve directly out of frequent and regular self-evaluation. Actions taken by staff have had a direct impact on improving attainment for individuals and groups of pupils. All forms of discrimination and all forms of barriers to learning within the school have been tackled effectively as a result of the school's outstanding promotion of equality of opportunity. Despite the large increase in pupils with a learning difficulty and/or disability, the school has very good systems in place to provide frequent and personalised catch-up programmes. As a result, all pupils make good progress. The school's promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. It works with different types of schools to enable pupils to socialise with and learn to appreciate people of different faiths and cultures.

The governing body is proactive and acts as a critical friend, challenging and supporting the school but it does not regularly monitor all statutory duties and regulations as well as it could. There are also a few aspects of health and safety which are not fully in place; as a result safeguarding is satisfactory.

There are good partnerships with other schools, the local authority and with the parish. This has a positive impact on pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development and on the quality of the curriculum.

These are the grades for leadership and management

Communicating ambition and driving improvement	1
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	1
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	3
Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	3
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision-making about matters relating to learning and well-being	2
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	2
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	3
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Reception class with broadly average skills and knowledge for their age. They make good progress in most areas of learning, particularly in reading, mathematics and in their confidence and independence. In the observed sessions, children were actively engaged, enthusiastic, knew class routines and systems and enjoyed their learning. Teachers make good use of the interactive whiteboard, compact disc player and other resources to make the taught part of lessons highly visual, vibrant and well paced. Expectations are high and pupils make good progress in their early reading and phonic skills. In one good example a new sound -'air' - was introduced. By the end of the session, the children had made good progress in being able to say and read the sound. Although all of the areas of learning are catered for within the safe, bright indoor learning environment, not all activities are linked as well as they could be to the central learning objective or the theme. Children's skills and their progress in writing are not as good as in other areas of learning. For instance, there were only a very small number of children, in the observed sessions, engaged in writing tasks – all were girls.

Although the outdoor space is used in most lessons, there are two large holes in the surface. To compensate for the small and uninspiring outdoor space, children have good opportunities to use the full playground and the equipment in the adjoining school to increase their physical development. There are good opportunities for role play, indoors and outdoors, and these are effective in building pupils' spoken language skills. It was enjoyable to see so many in bear costumes, for example, acting out the story of Goldilocks.

How good are the outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
What is the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
How effectively is the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	2
Overall effectiveness: how well does the setting/school meet the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2

Views of parents and carers

Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school keeps their child safe. A large majority agreed the school is well led and managed, their child enjoys school and the school helps pupils to maintain a healthy lifestyle. A similar proportion was happy with the progress their children are making; with the information they get from school about pupils' progress; and that this helps parents to support pupils' learning. A very small number felt they were not informed about their child's progress, did not have their concerns listened to, and felt the school did not meet their child's needs. A very small number were concerned about the woodland at the side of the school.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

- Attainment: the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
- Progress: the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
- Achievement: an overall measure of the pupils' success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Pupils might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
- Capacity to improve: the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
- Leadership and management: the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



Inspection of Holy Family Primary School, Southport.

12 February 2009

Dear children,

Thank you so much for helping us when we came to your school recently. We enjoyed meeting and talking to you and looking at your work. You expressed your opinions very clearly. Everyone we met in lessons and in the playground told us that you enjoy coming to school, that you feel very safe and that Holy Family is a good school. We agree with you. It is clear that because your lessons are good you all progress well, particularly in mathematics and science. You reach above average levels in subjects such as history, music, Spanish, mathematics and science. We think you could reach higher levels than you do at present in writing and some other subjects such as geography and art. We have asked the teachers to increase the proportion of you that reach Level 4 and Level 5 in writing. We have asked the school to look into developing their writing skills in tasks linked to the focus of the lesson. Because we also think that the subjects could be linked together more and activities more interesting, we have asked the school to look into this further.

The staff at Holy Family are excellent at supporting and caring for you. This means that everyone is treated equally, is included and everyone makes good progress regardless of their background. It is a warm and friendly place to learn. Your parents and carers were very positive about the education you receive. A small number who answered the questionnaire wanted to improve some matters, for instance communication between home and school. I have asked the headteacher to look into the points a few of your parents have raised.

The leaders of your school all have an excellent focus on improving standards and making sure everyone in the school knows what to do to improve. We have asked the governors to look regularly at whether the school does everything that it is required to do, and to make sure that all risk assessments and checks are in place.

Finally, we found that you behave well and are polite and sensible in and around school. You have a good understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle, and have good skills that will help you in your future lives.

We wish you all the luck for the future.

Best wishes,

Mr Torr
Her Majesty's Inspector

Mr Simms
Additional Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.