

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105087
Local Authority	Wirral
Inspection number	324154
Inspection dates	11–12 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Maureen Coleman

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)	202
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 P Moor
Headteacher	Miss J Bradley
Date of previous school inspection	19 October 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Gautby Road Birkenhead Merseyside CH41 7DU
Telephone number	0151 6528454
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School is located in a new building in Bidston on the Wirral. The local area is one of high social disadvantage. It is an average size school and numbers are stable. The vast majority of children are White British with a small proportion from minority ethnic groups. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is among the highest nationally. The school makes provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in a Nursery and Reception class. When children start in Nursery most have a level of skills well below that typically expected of this age. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very high.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils.

As a result of consistently good teaching, and from an extremely low starting point, children make good progress in the EYFS. They enter Key Stage 1 having made up much ground but their skills remain below those typically found at this stage. Thereafter, pupils' progress is mostly satisfactory, rather than good, because the quality of teaching varies and is satisfactory overall. This represents satisfactory achievement. Staff show care and consideration towards pupils and for the most part pupils respond in kind. Their behaviour is satisfactory. The headteacher is committed to the distinctive Catholic nature of the school, and liaises well with the parish and church to ensure that the school is an integral part of the local community. Senior leaders have an over-generous view of the school's performance although they are aware of relative strengths and weaknesses.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The leadership's efforts to improve the school's provision for pupils have met with mixed success and are satisfactory overall. The school's capacity to improve and the value for money achieved are also satisfactory. Some areas identified at the last inspection show improvement, such as teachers' marking of pupils' work. However, there remains the need for the further development of other aspects. For example, the quality of teaching and learning in the school is variable. After a good start in the EYFS, pupils experience inconsistency in the quality of lessons they receive as they move through the school. Consequently, the progress that is made is similarly varied.

The standards pupils attain are below average by the end of Key Stage 1 and broadly average by the end of Key Stage 2. Overall standards in the school have remained static in recent years. The school has introduced a range of initiatives such as a new writing scheme; a tracking system to monitor pupils' progress and extra support for pupils with additional learning needs. Much of this is at a relatively early stage and the impact on the outcomes for pupils is yet to be fully realised.

The best teaching is seen in the EYFS and upper Key Stage 2 where teachers have high expectations of pupils' engagement in lessons. There is a sharp focus on the objectives for pupils' learning and effective practical activities. As a result, pupils learn at a quick rate with much enjoyment. Conversely, in other year groups tasks are not matched sufficiently closely to pupils' learning needs. Many pupils lose interest and the pace of learning slows. Overall, the rate of progress is slower in Key Stage 1 than that in Key Stage 2. The school's leadership is providing effective support and guidance to improve the quality of teaching and learning. This is a recent development and needs more time to impact fully on the progress pupils are making. The curriculum makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' personal and academic development. Provision for basic skills is satisfactory, although in some lessons opportunities to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills fully are missed. A satisfactory range of extra activities are provided after school and visits and visitors enhance pupils' learning.

The school successfully enables pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles by promoting involvement in sporting activities, providing fruit and freely available drinking water, and including drugs education in the curriculum. Pupils learn about safe practices and say they understand the difference between right and wrong. They are confident that incidents of misbehaviour or bullying are dealt with effectively by school staff. The school successfully enables pupils to develop increasing independence by taking responsibilities such helping at lunchtime and as

members of the school council. Despite the school's best efforts, the level of pupils' attendance is exceptionally low. This hinders their learning and is rightly of great concern to the school's leadership. The school has a good partnership with the local authority welfare officer who provides timely support for those pupils with the lowest attendance.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The overall effectiveness of the provision in the EYFS is good. It meets the needs of children well. Most children enter Nursery with skills and knowledge which are well below those expected of similar age children. School assessments show that the level of skills and experience of these children has fallen in recent years. In particular, their speaking and listening skills are extremely low. The school has in place a communication, language and literacy programme which successfully helps children to improve. Throughout the EYFS, children make good progress because of good teaching so that although they enter Key Stage 1 with skills below those expected nationally, the gap has narrowed. This represents good achievement. Children learn to cooperate and improve their social skills through well established and structured daily routines. Staff set high expectations for children's behaviour, and the children respond by treating each other with consideration and respect. All areas of learning in the EYFS curriculum are soundly in place. Suitable practical tasks are provided which are well matched to the children's interests. Leadership and management of the EYFS are good. The EYFS leader provides clear guidance and direction, for example in the planning of the curriculum. Children's progress is closely monitored and recorded in the EYFS Profile.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement, especially in Key Stage 1.
- Improve the proportion of good quality teaching and learning, particularly in relation to the level of challenge provided for pupils.
- Improve attendance.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit from an Ofsted inspector before their section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Most children enter Key Stage 1 with skills below those expected of children of this age. In particular, the school recognises the need to focus on developing children's communication, language and literacy skills. As a result of satisfactory teaching and learning, children make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1 and standards reached by the end of Year 2 are below average in reading, writing and mathematics. The most able children do not readily attain the higher levels in national assessments. In Key Stage 2 pupils make satisfactory progress overall to attain broadly average standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. Pupils' progress accelerates in Years 5 and 6 because of good and occasionally outstanding teaching. Although a good many pupils make satisfactory and sometimes good progress, a significant minority of pupils, including some of the higher attaining pupils, do not always achieve as well as they should. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve in line with their classmates.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Spiritual development is a particular strength as seen in pupils' responses during the Remembrance Day assembly where they were very respectful, attentive and reflective. Pupils enjoy school reasonably well and particularly appreciate the extra-curricular activities the school provides. Healthy lifestyles are promoted well. Most pupils respect each other and behave appropriately but a minority of pupils show thoughtless and careless behaviour towards each other. Pupils say they feel safe from bullying most of the time. Some pupils show individual enterprise by taking the lead in class responsibilities and during assemblies. Pupils' satisfactory basic skills mean that they are adequately prepared for the next stage of their education. However, pupils' attendance is well below that seen in most schools. Limited opportunities are provided for pupils to make a positive contribution to their school community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning varies across the school and the proportion of lessons that are good or better is not high enough. Teaching and learning in the majority of lessons is satisfactory with evidence of good and some outstanding teaching in upper Key Stage 2. Teaching and learning is consistently good in the EYFS. A whole-school planning policy is in place, which helps to ensure consistency in the structure of lessons with clearly identified and specific learning objectives. In the best lessons, pupils respond well to teachers' challenging questions and enjoy engaging in a range of practical activities well matched to their needs and interests. In these lessons behaviour is good and pupils have positive relationships with their teachers. They enjoy opportunities to work collaboratively and freely discuss their ideas and opinions. Conversely, in weaker lessons pupils are more passive in their learning because the pace of teaching and learning is slow. Expectations of what pupils can achieve in a given time are too low. Pupils become disinterested and distracted too easily. Teaching assistants make a satisfactory contribution to the support and guidance of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school curriculum is satisfactory. Provision for basic skills is suitable and some initiatives, such as the new writing scheme, are beginning to impact on raising standards. Curricular provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good, and effectively supports their learning. Pupils who are gifted and talented benefit from some enrichment activities in visits out of school, but do not always receive well matched and challenging tasks in daily lessons. There is a suitable range of extra-curricular activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school has appropriate safeguarding arrangements in place to protect pupils and these meet current government guidelines. Pupils find staff approachable and most are confident

that their concerns are fully heard and acted upon. The school works satisfactorily with parents to involve them in their children's learning. The leadership's efforts to promote pupils' attendance are satisfactory, although the impact is insufficient as yet. There is a comprehensive tracking system in place, but its effectiveness in ensuring that all groups of pupils achieve well is limited. Targets are in place for each year group of pupils to work towards, but there is an absence of targets for individual pupils and a lack of challenge in this regard.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels is satisfactory in supporting learning. The headteacher and deputy headteacher give clear direction and have a good understanding of what needs to be done to improve standards. They are kept informed about the strengths and weaknesses in the school's provision by the results of adequate monitoring undertaken by subject leaders. The leadership team evaluates the outcomes of subject leader monitoring and uses this to prioritise areas for improvement. However, leaders overestimate the quality of the school's provision and its impact on outcomes for pupils. Subject leader roles are at an early stage of development, a point which the school rightly acknowledges. The governing body is led by a knowledgeable, well informed chair who makes regular visits to school. Governors receive appropriate information about the school's performance and fulfil their statutory duties.

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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?	3
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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	4
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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 learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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**

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. Holy Cross Catholic Primary School is giving you a satisfactory education. You are making some progress in lessons but standards are still not quite high enough and we think you could do better. We could see that in the Nursery and Reception and at the top end of Key Stage 2 some pupils are making faster progress and this is because teachers set work that is interesting, fun and matched to what each of you can do. We have asked your headteacher to make sure this happens in all your classes. We have also asked your school to look for ways to improve your attendance, which at the moment is not good enough. You could also help to improve this by coming to school every day and at the right time.

You told us that your teachers are caring and kind and that you feel safe and happy at school. Most of you get on well together and behave well. Some of you enjoy helping your school by being lunchtime helpers and serving on the school council. Your school is good at helping you to lead healthy lives and we were pleased to see that you have gained the Activemark for physical education.