

Holy Family Catholic Primary School, Benfleet

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115158
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	326140
Inspection dates	16–17 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Sarah McDermott

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	204
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	Mrs Nikki Williams
Headteacher	Mr Peter O'Kane
Date of previous school inspection	20 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Kents Hill Road South Benfleet Benfleet Essex SS7 5PX

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	16–17 March 2009
Inspection number	326140

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Holy Family Catholic Primary is an average sized school. Most pupils come from the attached two parishes, but a small number of pupils from other faiths are starting to join the school. A very large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and nearly all speak English at home. Very few pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils who need extra help because they have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than average. The school has gained several accreditations, including Activemark and the national Healthy Schools Award.

The school has one Reception class in the Early Years Foundation Stage. A pre-school, called the Holy Family Early Learning Centre, shares the school site but is not managed by the governing body.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Holy Family Primary is a satisfactory school with many strengths in the personal development of the pupils. Despite several recent changes amongst the senior leaders, the headteacher has ensured that the strong Catholic ethos underpins a true family school. One parent commented, 'we feel that our children don't just attend a school, but are part of a very caring community'. Pupils participate enthusiastically in a wide range of active clubs and are outstanding ambassadors when representing their school in competitions and concerts. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is good. In the main, pupils have a good understanding of different cultures and lifestyles around the world. Pupils are respectful, polite and behave extremely well.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Consequently, pupils make satisfactory progress from their starting points and attain above average standards in English, mathematics and science. Teachers have very good relationships with their pupils and manage their classrooms well. However, the inconsistent quality of teaching means that the pupils' rate of progress varies too much from year to year. Some teaching is of a high quality, but this good practice is not evident in all classes. The curriculum is good. The promotion of music and sport is particularly effective. A great number of pupils have instrument tuition or take part in orchestra practice. The advancement of healthy and safe lives is paramount. However, the school has not sufficiently explored why the organisation of the curriculum is not resulting in pupils' better achievement.

The pastoral care of the pupils is outstanding and endorsed fervently by many parents. One parent reported, 'Since he joined I have a new little boy who is very, very happy and who has made lots of friends.' Pupils are safe and secure because safeguarding systems are well organised. Nevertheless, the academic guidance of pupils is only satisfactory. Teachers are not yet all confident in using assessment data to ensure that work is always matched to the particular needs of pupils so that achievement is raised. Pupils who are taught well know what they need to do to improve their work, but others are less sure.

The new headteacher and senior leadership team agree what needs to be improved. They have introduced successful recent initiatives, such as the Making Good Progress programme. Consequently writing has improved since the last inspection. Although there are more innovative plans in the pipeline, many are too new to have had their impact measured. The senior leaders are good teaching role models but do not yet ensure that all their colleagues are sufficiently accountable for standards and achievement. Consequently, leadership and management and the school's capacity to improve are satisfactory.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children enter the Reception class with skills similar to those expected for their age and make satisfactory progress in all the areas of learning. By the time they transfer to Year 1 almost all reach their early learning goals and some exceed them. Teaching seen during the inspection captured the children's interest well. For example, children thoroughly enjoyed counting passing cars and sorting their results into different colour groups for a bar chart. However, systems to assess children's progress are new and are only just starting to have an impact on the way teachers plan to support each individual child. This year was the first time that staff accurately assessed each child's capabilities on arrival to give them a starting point from which to gauge

progress. Children behave very well and make good progress in their personal development. The staff provide plenty of opportunities to develop the children's speaking, listening and phonics skills. There is a good balance between activities led by the staff and the chance for children's own independence and creativity. The welfare of the children is promoted effectively and children know how to keep themselves healthy and safe. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress to their classmates because staff are sensitive to each individual's needs. The inspectors agree with the school's evaluation that the impact of the leadership and management is satisfactory. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader is starting to ensure that data passed on from Reception is used effectively in Year 1 for a smooth academic transition.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teaching is of uniformly good quality to challenge all pupils to improve their rate of achievement.
- Develop assessment systems so that all teachers can track their pupils' progress accurately.
- Develop the rigour with which the senior leadership team holds teachers to account for pupils' progress.

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

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement in 2007 was satisfactory in English and mathematics but pupils did not achieve as well as they should have done in science. In the 2007 national tests at the end of Year 2, standards were above average in reading and mathematics and exceptionally high in writing. At the end of Year 6, test results were above average in English and mathematics but average in science. In 2008, standards in reading, writing and mathematics were average at the end of Key Stage 1. Unvalidated national tests for Key Stage 2 in 2008 indicate that standards were above national averages in all three subjects and achievement was satisfactory.

In the past, pupils entered Year 1 with skills above expectations for their age. The academic profile of pupils now indicates that pupils enter school with capabilities expected for their age. They are currently making satisfactory progress in lessons overall, although there are some discrepancies in the rate of progress in different classes. Pupils are also on course to meet their challenging targets. Pupils who learn more slowly or have behavioural difficulties achieve satisfactorily. The very small number of pupils who do not speak English at home or who are from minority ethnic backgrounds make equally satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Excellent relationships between pupils and adults and among the pupils themselves make for productive learning. Pupils enjoy their lessons and are very keen to take part in class discussions. Several commented that they felt some lessons were too easy and that they could learn faster if given the chance to be more independent. The pupils' behaviour is exemplary within classrooms and moving around the school. In an inspirational assembly pupils listened with rapt attention to the stories about St Patrick. The strong ethos of respect and consideration for others

permeates all that the school does. One pupil said, 'I like this school because you learn how to make friends.' Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding, and their cultural development is good because they have a good understanding of other cultures, especially in Europe, the Americas and Australasia. However, there is scope to broaden their awareness of other faiths. Levels of attendance are consistently above the national average.

The school has a powerful sense of community. Pupils raise funds keenly for charities, such as the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD), and are instrumental in formulating the school's code of conduct. A great number very proudly participate in musical and sporting events on behalf of their school. Pupils feel safe because they know they can easily approach an adult and they are confident that their concerns will be resolved swiftly. School initiatives on sensible eating, the importance of exercise, safe play, road safety and cycling proficiency result in extremely health-conscious pupils. Despite some variations in achievement in the key skills, pupils are prepared well for the next stage of education and the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

All teachers have very good relationships with their pupils so that they feel very much at ease with their learning. They organise their classes well so that resources are to hand and pupils can easily see the board. However, the quality of teaching and learning is not consistently good enough to ensure that pupils make more than satisfactory progress. There is some outstanding practice, for example in a Year 5 literacy lesson when pupils used powerful and persuasive language to promote Southend as an English holiday destination. In other lessons, the pace of learning is sometimes too slow with the result that pupils are not as productive as they should be. For example, on occasion more able pupils mark time listening to introductions pitched at a level for the less able, when they could be getting on with independent work. Teachers are starting to use information collected from past lessons and tests to ensure that work is matched to individual need, but this is not common practice in all lessons. Teaching assistants are valuable in helping pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to progress as well as their classmates. Teachers mark work regularly. They are encouraging and positive, but some do not add enough pointers as to how the pupils could improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is broad, balanced and caters well for pupils with particular needs, interests or talents. Through successful partnerships, all pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 learn to play a stringed instrument and many pupils benefit from specialist coaching in sports such as football, archery, cricket and swimming. Visitors give pupils a good insight into the world of finance and increase their awareness of environmental issues. Enrichment Days, and in particular the Book Sleep Over, broaden pupils' experiences and stimulate their love of reading. A remarkably wide choice of extra-curricular activities includes drama, computers, chess, ballet and cookery. In lessons, there is an appropriate emphasis on promoting literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology, although some teachers are better than others at extending these core skills in subjects other than English and mathematics. Opportunities for pupils to learn independently vary from class to class. The school has implemented activities under the Gifted and Talented programme in conjunction with local secondary schools and is starting to introduce

its own measures to extend their learning in school under the direction of the special educational needs coordinator.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Parents are particularly appreciative of the very strong pastoral care of their children. One parent reported, 'The staff are very caring, thoughtful and totally committed,' and another commented, 'The school fosters a sense of morality, kindness and compassion.' Good child protection and health and safety systems ensure that pupils work and play in a safe environment. A comprehensive programme for personal, social and health education helps prepare pupils well for life beyond school. Academic guidance is less well developed. Staff are starting to get to grips with a new assessment system to allow them to set meaningful targets for individual pupils. However, pupils are not all sufficiently clear about how they can reach the next steps in their learning. The school makes sound provision for pupils who have additional needs, including the few who are at the early stages of learning English.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher puts the well-being and happiness of the pupils as top priorities in all he does. Quite rightly, he is held in high esteem by the parents. He involves them very well in the school's successes and ensures that the school has strong links with the parish. The school is working very well with its wider local community. It encourages pupils to value diversity and has enabled them to have a good understanding of other cultures. The school acknowledges that there is scope to deepen pupils' understanding of world faiths

The new senior leadership team knows the strengths and weaknesses of the school. It has mapped out appropriate key priorities for improvement, although the likely impact of management decisions on the achievement of the pupils is not always sufficiently clear. The team works well with the local authority and outside agencies for professional development and support. Senior leaders are good teaching practitioners in their own right. Through rigorous observations and scrutiny, they are starting to evaluate their colleagues' performance effectively and beginning to improve pupils' achievement. They are helping teachers to grow in confidence in their use of the new assessment system. However, some past uncertainty in tracking pupils' progress has detracted from setting realistic targets. Governors are very loyal, but they do not sufficiently challenge the school on pupils' achievement.

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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?	2
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?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
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?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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?	3
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?	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	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	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**

18 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Holy Family Catholic Primary School, Benfleet, SS7 5PX

Thank you very much for helping us on the inspection by talking to us and showing us what you can do. Your parents believe you are happy and in safe hands. We definitely agree.

You go to a satisfactory school. Standards in English, mathematics and science are above most other schools and you are making satisfactory progress because teaching is satisfactory. We think some teaching is extremely good, but some teaching does not help you progress well enough. Mr O'Kane and his team of senior teachers lead the school satisfactorily. Some are new to their leadership roles but already they are thinking of ways to improve the quality of teaching so that you can achieve better.

You told us that you like coming to school and we are not surprised. You get on very well with your teachers and friends. Behaviour is excellent. We are pleased that you know how to lead such healthy and safe lives. We especially like the way you are developing as responsible young people and help to write your own code of conduct. It is not every day that we see so many pupils playing such a wide range of stringed and percussion instruments in orchestra practice!

To make your education better, I have asked your school to do three things:

- make sure teaching is at least good in all classes so you can make better progress
- help teachers to be confident in seeing where you have gaps in your learning and setting work to match your abilities
- develop new senior leaders in their role supporting Mr O'Kane to improve the school.

We thoroughly enjoyed our visit to your school. We know that your teachers make your school a very special place for you. You can do your bit by continuing to be positive and by making the most of your time at Holy Family School.

Yours faithfully

Sarah McDermott

Lead inspector