

Holy Souls Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103429
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	336079
Inspection dates	28–29 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Alan Dobbins

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	410
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Cunningham
Headteacher	Kevin Kelly
Date of previous school inspection	25 April 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 13 teachers in part or the whole of 14 lessons, spoke with the chair of governors and one other governor, senior leaders and the school improvement partner. They looked at data the school has on pupils' progress and analysed documents and policies. They scrutinised 34 staff, 105 pupil and 203 parent questionnaires. They spoke with 32 parents.

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

- whether the attainment and progress of pupils leaving Year 6 at the end of this year continues the trend of improved performance seen over the last two years
- the effectiveness of teaching in raising achievement of all pupils
- the impact of senior leaders, and governors, in improving the school
- how good is the start for children in the Reception Year?

Information about the school

Holy Souls is a large school. Most of the pupils are of a White British heritage, but there has been a recent influx of pupils from Poland. As a consequence, the proportion of pupils learning English as an additional language is increasing and is greater than is expected nationally. The school is located in one of the highest areas of socio-economic deprivation in the City of Birmingham. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is more than is typical. The Early Years Foundation Stage is made up of the Reception year only.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Holy Souls is a good school. It is better than at the time of the last inspection. Senior leaders have worked hard and successfully to raise attainment and improve pupils' progress, whilst maintaining the school as a safe, happy and harmonious place. Pupils prosper as learners and as young people being well prepared for the next stage of their education and life thereafter. They say they enjoy school because it 'is a nice place to be' and because they are 'doing so well in their learning.' Parents and carers praise the school, one saying that all three of her children attended Holy Souls and they have had 'the best start in life.'

Children enter the Reception Year with skills below those expected for their age, especially in their use of language and number. They settle quickly and establish good relationships with the staff and with each other. Over the year, they make good progress and enter Year 1 still below, but closer to, levels expected for them nationally. Over Years 1 to 6, pupils make good progress in English and in science and satisfactory progress in mathematics. This includes those who learn English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Progress in English and science has steadily improved over each of the last three years. This year's (2010) leavers are continuing the trend of better performance. They are leaving with levels in English and science that are well above the local and national expectations for their age. Furthermore, the upward trend seems likely to continue. School data shows that the average attainment for pupils in each year group is better than for the previous year. Consequently, pupils in the current Year 5 are predicted to do even better when they leave than have those leaving this year.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and say that 'it is a place where it is easy to make new friends'. They, and their parents and carers, say they feel safe there. They behave well in lessons and around the school and are polite to, and respectful of, visitors. In lessons, they show that they have fully accepted their role as learners and, routinely, work hard to do their best. The intrinsic link with Catholic beliefs, that permeates all the work of the school, contributes to pupils gaining a secure sense of right and wrong. It helps them show maturity when they have choices to make, including those to do with staying safe and, especially, in keeping healthy. Most attend regularly enough to gain full benefit from what the school offers.

Leaders have a good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses through their effective procedures for self-evaluation. Since the last inspection, they have driven up the quality of teaching and learning, which has been a primary contributor to improving progress. In most lessons teaching is good with a greater proportion of outstanding lessons being taught over each of the last three years. However, leaders know that

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continuing to improve progress in learning requires even higher standards of teaching, and to achieve this they are working hard to match lesson planning and tasks closer to pupils learning needs and capabilities. Better use needs to be made of marking to guide pupils to the next steps in their learning and a more accurate system is required for recognising how good is the progress of pupils against those in other schools. The capacity for continuing improvement is good. Staff morale is high and staff are committed to supporting leaders in the continuous development of the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and progress by:
 - sharpening lesson planning to ensure that tasks match more often with the capabilities and prior learning of each pupil
 - making marking and feedback more effective in supporting learning by giving precise practical advice on moving to the next steps of learning
 - refining the use of the tracking data in judging the progress of pupils against those in other schools.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Attainment is above average. Lessons are purposeful and enjoyable events. Many lessons are planned well enough and are made up of activities that are relevant to pupils. As a consequence all pupils do equivalently well against their targets. Those, for example who are in the early stages of learning English or in dealing with their learning difficulties and or disabilities gain effective help quickly. These lessons hurry along as pupils work hard in attending to their tasks and enjoy doing so. In some lessons planning does not take enough account of what pupils know and can do. When this is the case, pupils rehearse what they already know or attempt tasks that are too hard for them. Both contribute to slowing down their progress.

The school is a close and supportive community. Pupils are proud of the many roles they play in the day-to-day running of the school, from membership of the school and class councils to being playground buddies. The school has very strong links with the activities of the parish, including school Mass and by taking important roles in church services. Parents report that the school is very well thought of in the locality and pupils take part in many of the locally arranged celebrations, for example at Christmas and other times. Through the study of their own religious beliefs they gain a good knowledge of the similarities and differences in the cultural and religious traditions of others. They talk sensitively about their own and others' experiences and relate these to their own situations in seeing their advantages. They gain good awareness of the wider world through helping to choose the many national and international charities they support. They show the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle by their high level of participation in after school sports clubs and through their good eating choices. The residential visit is much enjoyed by Year 6 pupils. For many this is the first time they will

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have been away from their families and it is a valuable opportunity for them to gain the self confidence and self assurance they require as young people who are fully ready for the next stage of their education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Overall teaching is good, with many strengths. These include the good way teachers use the interactive white boards, the way they deploy their talented assistants, the good relationships they have with their pupils and the way they use the thumbs up, sideways or down convention to receive immediate feedback on pupil's learning at different times in lessons. In the outstanding lessons, teachers plan learning that is well matched to pupils' abilities, present tasks in interesting ways and excite and enthuse pupils in their learning. Often pupils are required find out things for themselves, for example through searching about the Menorah on the internet or working out why a toy car runs different distances from a gradient when the surfaces are changed. In a few lessons, learning is much less exciting because it is not personalised as much to the learning needs and interests of individual pupils. Too often the focal point is teacher talk and pupils act as

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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passive rather than active learners. Even in these lessons they behave well and most often try their hardest but they gain too little enjoyment from their learning. Marking and feedback are not making a substantial enough contribution to promoting learning. Too many opportunities are missed in guiding pupils' next steps in learning.

Pupils are well served by the curriculum; it is broadened and enriched by a very wide range of additional activities. Every day pupils are able to take part in a good number of after school clubs. These include sports clubs, such as football, rounders, netball, cricket, athletics and basketball. There are religious activity clubs, such as the Legion of Mary and alter serving and academic clubs, including computers and reading. Pupils have an exceptional opportunity to learn a musical instrument. Currently, some 120 pupils are learning to play a keyboard, clarinet, guitar or recorder. Using the facilities and expertise of teachers in the nearby secondary school extends pupils' learning experiences beyond those available at Holy Souls. Pupils gain by going there for French lessons and to use the specialist facilities for physical education and food studies.

The school has a good 'family feel'. This is because the procedures for securing the care and well-being of pupils are robust and applied rigorously. Pupils are quick to say they are happy at school because they feel safe and secure, both as young people and as learners. Support for pupils learning English as an additional language and for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. The provision map for each pupil is a very effective record of interventions, for example to improve reading, and other information, such as any links with outside agencies as well as attendance and punctuality. In most lessons pupils identified as gifted and talented gain good enrichment and extension opportunities that challenge them well. Much appreciated by parents and carers are the Inspire workshops, which provide guidance as to how they can best support the learning of their children at home and how they can help in preparing them for their move to their next school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders have a clear vision for continuing to develop the school. Since the last inspection they have been successful in improving teaching and learning, extending pupils' curricular experiences and creating outstanding links with parents and carers. In this, they have been supported well by an able body of governors. Through their good procedures for self evaluation senior leaders know the school well. They know that the

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competence and commitment of the teaching staff, teachers and their assistants, has made a major contribution to pushing up progress and they know what is required to make teaching even more effective in continuing to increase progress. The first steps are the better match of lesson tasks to pupils' learning needs and the more effective use of marking. They are aware that a sharper analysis of the assessment information available on pupils is needed to help them judge how well the school is doing in moving closer to the vision they have for outstanding quality.

Safeguarding procedures are thorough as the school has adopted good practice. Good procedures operate to ensure that all pupils have equal access to all the school offers, and that no group of pupils, for example those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or those learning English as an additional language are in any way disadvantaged. Due regard has been paid to community cohesion and the audit provides good guidance, including the need to develop more national links. Those already made with the local community are extensive and very well established and beneficially extend pupils' learning experiences. Many are located within the celebration of the Catholic faith, for example pupils helping in the parish bazaar, reading at mass and serving at the altar. The very effective contribution of the parent liaison worker has raised the profile of parents and carers as partners in supporting the work of the school. The systems for providing information on the school, such as the weekly newsletter and the two formal meetings a year work very effectively and the great majority of parents and carers feel they are very well informed about their children's achievement, well-being and development. An increasing number gain information through the school's website and the blogs for each class, but many still see the 'open door' policy for visits as the most meaningful way of contacting staff.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

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Early Years Foundation Stage

When they enter the Reception Year many of the children have not experienced formal nursery education. Nevertheless, they settle very well. They quickly develop good relationships with staff, which help them feel safe and secure. They play well with each other as they develop friendships. They show their increasing maturity by the respect they have for each other, for example when they work on shared tasks, and by behaving well. From a low base children make good progress in the Reception Year.

The good leadership and management are seen in many ways. Teaching is good because staff are well trained and deployed well. Planning for learning is detailed and the good knowledge staff have of their children often means that activities are personalised to children's interests and capabilities with a good balance of child initiated and teacher led activities. Good assessment procedures help recognise children's strengths and weaknesses, and accurately chart progress over the year against the Foundation Skills Profile. Specialist support, especially for those learning English as an additional language, is made quickly available.

The Reception area is a colourful, well resourced and happy place that is characterised by children earnestly going about their work. The outside area is used well enough, but limits planning for a full range of possible activities, especially during inclement weather. Transition arrangements into Year 1 operate very smoothly and the good progress children make in their reception year ensures that they are prepared well for the challenges of Year 1.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The great majority of parents and carers who returned the questionnaire or who talked to inspectors were very pleased with the work of the school. One parent judged the school to be 'a terrific place' and one who recently arrived in this country with her children said that for her son 'the school was the best'. They support all aspects of the school, but are least secure in their support for the way the school deals with inappropriate behaviour. Inspectors looked closely at this and judged that the specific strategies for improving behaviour work well. Also, the behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school is good. During the time of the inspection the school was calm

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and well ordered.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Holy Souls Catholic Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 203 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 410 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	110	54	87	43	5	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	117	58	82	40	4	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	101	50	93	46	6	3	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	105	52	88	43	6	3	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	109	54	86	42	2	1	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	102	50	89	44	10	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	90	44	106	52	6	3	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	91	45	97	48	5	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	89	44	98	48	7	3	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	91	45	81	40	17	8	5	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	83	41	96	47	10	5	5	2
The school is led and managed effectively	96	47	89	44	8	4	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	108	53	82	40	6	3	1	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



30 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Holy Souls Catholic Primary School, Birmingham, B27 6BN

It was lovely for me and my colleagues to meet and spend time with you when we visited your school. Thank you for making us so welcome. We found your school to be a good school. These are some of the things we especially liked:

- you are safe and extremely well cared for at school
- the outstanding way the school links with your parents and carers in supporting you
- the good progress you make in your learning in the lessons
- you know the importance of a healthy lifestyle and most of you make healthy choices most of the time
- the way in which your headteacher and the other senior leaders are improving the school by:
 - making teaching better
 - giving you many opportunities outside of lessons to take part in activities that interest you, for example in the after school clubs and when you learn to play a musical instrument.

There are a few things we have asked the senior leaders to do to make it an even better school. We want them to make sure your teachers use assessment information they have on each of you to plan lessons that have just the right amount of challenge for you; not too easy or too hard. We also want teachers to mark your work better so that you know what you have to do to get to the next point in your learning. Finally, we want your senior leaders to be better at judging how well you are doing in your learning against pupils in other similar schools

Of course, you can help too; by always behaving as well as you did over the time of our visit and by continuing to work hard all the time

Yours sincerely

Alan Dobbins

Lead inspector

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