

St Philip Howard Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117469
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	339013
Inspection dates	20–21 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Paul Canham

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	346
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue McLellan
Headteacher	Mairead Waugh
Date of previous school inspection	22 November 2006
School address	Woods Avenue Hatfield AL10 8NN
Telephone number	01707 263969
Fax number	01707 263969
Email address	admin@sphoward.herts.sch.uk

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	20–21 May 2010
Inspection number	339013

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

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.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2010

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 20 lessons, held meetings with governors, staff and a group of pupils, and talked with pupils in lessons. No discussions were held with parents and carers. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including assessment and attendance information, lesson plans, safeguarding arrangements, school development planning, governing body minutes and pupils' work. They also scrutinised the 174 questionnaires received from parents and carers, as well as those from staff and a sample of pupils.

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

- the extent to which the school is accelerating achievement, particularly for the most able pupils
- how successfully the school promotes pupils' experience and appreciation of cultures and faiths other than their own in this country and beyond
- the influence of the new leadership team, and that of the governing body, on the school's direction and performance.

Information about the school

The school is larger than most other primary schools. Almost half of pupils are from families of White British heritage and the majority of the other half come from White with other backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above that found in most schools. The proportion of pupils at the early stages of learning English as an additional language is increasing. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average, but is significant in some year groups where proportions are between 25% and 30%. Some pupils are taught in classes which contain more than one age group.

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage into one of three nursery classes that have flexible arrangements to meet the particular needs of parents and carers.

The school has achieved National Healthy Schools status and has the Activemark award. There is after-school care provision within the school, but this is not managed by the governors and was not inspected.

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

An outstanding feature of this effective school is the very supportive, caring environment which provides a solid foundation for the school's work. It successfully promotes an ethos of self-esteem and respect for others, which is central to the school's harmonious learning community. Consequently, pupils have outstanding behaviour and attitudes to school and readily take on additional responsibilities. They have an excellent awareness of how to keep safe and a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. This picture is reflected in the questionnaires completed by pupils where the very large majority indicated that they enjoy school. Pupils work exceptionally well in pairs and independently. These very strong features have a positive influence on pupils' good, and sometimes outstanding, progress, above average levels of attainment, and excellent personal development. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Together with close support from well-informed governors, skilful and resourceful leadership at the very top has developed a school that is committed to gaining the best provision and outcomes for all pupils and their families. Recent changes to the leadership team have resulted in highly committed staff readily taking on new areas of responsibility and successfully contributing to the school's collective leadership. The school has an accurate understanding of where it is now and of the improvements needed. These strengths provide a solid platform for learning and show that the school is well placed to move forward.

Children start school with a narrow range of skills, with particular weaknesses in communication. Improvements are such that standards for the majority of pupils have been lifted by Year 6 to above average levels. The school has successfully addressed the weaknesses in provision highlighted by the marked drop in attainment by Year 6 pupils in 2008. This cohort had a larger proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities than usual, which significantly influenced results. The school has now established systems that identify and pay particular attention to pupils' needs much earlier. The school is aware of the need to give pupils more opportunities to write for different purposes, not only in English, but in other subjects as well. Boys and girls achieve equally well.

The school's quest for high quality teaching is evident in the continual review of classroom practice based upon close monitoring. Consequently, pupils are progressing well, and sometimes exceptionally well, in lessons that, typically, are lively, interesting, and well paced. Intervention work, including focused support for individual pupils, is very successfully making up lost ground in learning for those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those whose first language is not English. However, in just a few lessons, the most able pupils are not given sufficiently

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

challenging tasks and the pace of their learning slows.

Clubs and performance activities are popular and provide pupils with good opportunities to develop their confidence, and their creative and performance skills. While the school has very good links with outside agencies, local schools and the community, it recognises the need to provide pupils with more opportunities to appreciate and value people's backgrounds and communities in other parts of the country and globally.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all teaching includes:
 - challenging tasks pitched at the right level, particularly for the more able
 - well paced activities which enable all pupils to make good gains in their learning.
 - Improve standards in writing by providing more opportunities for pupils to write for a wider range of purposes, not only in English lessons but in other subjects as well.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The pupils' enjoyment of learning stands out along with their eagerness to become involved in interesting activities in English, mathematics and science, for example. Pupils' very positive attitudes are characteristic of lessons and indicate the good progress which they make. In English lessons, pupils are full of imaginative ideas when exploring poems and demonstrate a good understanding of the skills needed when adapting a dialogue and turning it into a modern form of descriptive writing. Pupils show a great deal of independence. When working in pairs or small groups, pupils work productively and are very supportive of each other. Pupils also show great pride in getting the tasks right and explaining the reasons behind their answers.

Pupils currently in Year 6 are on course to reach the level expected for their age with a significant proportion on course to do even better. The school exceeded its challenging but realistic targets for both English and mathematics in 2009 and this picture is likely to be repeated this year. There are no significant differences between the achievement of different groups of pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The attainment levels of pupils whose first language is not English are above those found nationally for similar groups of pupils.

Pupils say they like coming to school and flourish in the highly supportive and caring environment. Respect and consideration for each other are at the core of the school's work. These strengths underpin the impeccable behaviour of pupils who get on extremely well with each other. Pupils are happy, confident and willingly take on responsibility, including acting as prefects and house captains. All these qualities contribute to the harmonious school community where: 'They treat pupils as individuals and embrace their different cultures,' as one parent reported. The school council

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

provides very good opportunities for pupils to represent the views of others and develop leadership qualities. Helped by the school's projects to encourage enterprise, including a recycling initiative in the local parish, pupils' personal skills are developing into important assets for future life. Pupils show exceptionally good levels of understanding about personal safety in and out of school.

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	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
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	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Consistently good, and sometimes outstanding, teaching leads to accelerated learning as pupils move through the school. Key strengths in teaching, which include a brisk pace, precise questioning and planning that is well matched to pupils' learning, are at the hub of pupils' above average standards. Timely reminders during lessons draw out misunderstandings and quickly guide pupils back on track. Teaching assistants give well informed and close support to individuals including those pupils who speak English as an additional language. However, sometimes, introductions are too long and pupils are given tasks which do not present sufficient challenge to really extend their learning. The wide range of displays gives an insight into the diversity of the curriculum. It

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

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

provides a careful balance between basic skills in literacy and numeracy and the development of pupils' performance and creative skills in subjects such as physical education, music and art. The teaching of French adds a further positive dimension. The curriculum is underpinned by a very well planned programme for personal, social and health education. It also takes very good account of the wide range of ability in mixed age classes. Strategies, which include giving greater attention to writing and teaching in similar ability groups, are having a positive impact on the progress made by pupils. However, the school recognises the need to include more writing opportunities in subjects other than English. Pupils' learning experiences are further enriched by a wide range of popular clubs, numerous trips locally and beyond, including residential trips for pupils in Years 5 and 6.

Many aspects of care, guidance and support are outstanding and have a demonstrable impact on improving outcomes for pupils. The exceptional pastoral care for pupils' personal development is recognised and highly valued by parents and carers: '...every day she wakes with a smile on her face knowing she leaves in the morning to go to a school she thoroughly loves and enjoys,' one parent reported. The close attention to pupils' health and well-being is reflected in the many opportunities for physical activity and the provision of healthy school meals. Individualised programmes of support are successfully drawn up for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable, covering a number of personal and learning needs. These programmes are supplemented by rigorous tracking of each pupil's progress. Very close liaison with parents, carers and outside agencies, and focused individual attention, enables those pupils with the greatest needs to gain the confidence and self-esteem to be successful learners.

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?

Strong leadership and management at the very top have been the driving force behind the school's improvement with good and some outstanding outcomes for individuals and groups of learners. These include substantial improvements in attendance and punctuality, pupils' awareness of their own academic levels and what they need to do to improve, and attainment levels that were above average in 2009 and which are on course to improve this year. With close support from governors, the headteacher has established a school that radiates a commitment to enhancing each pupil's self-esteem and confidence. Recently appointed members of the leadership team have successfully

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

taken on new areas of responsibility and are successfully contributing to the school's effectiveness. The school promotes equality and tackles any form of discrimination extremely well. Monitoring procedures are very effective in identifying the needs of pupils and, as a result, all groups of pupils make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress. Staff and governors have a very clear and accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.

Governors work closely with the school and share in its rigorous monitoring and evaluation. Their strategic involvement ensures that policies are systematically reviewed and resources are closely targeted at educational need. Attention to pupils' safety is integral to the school's work and safeguarding procedures are firmly established. Very detailed and well organised procedures ensure that safeguarding arrangements are carefully followed. The school uses well embedded and reliable quality assurance and risk assessment systems. Local services and agencies are used exceptionally well to enhance the well-being of pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Community cohesion is strongly promoted within the school and in the community. Links and partnerships with the parish, schools nearby and outside agencies are extensive and show a deep understanding of local needs and challenges. However, the school knows that it must do more to help pupils understand about people's backgrounds and communities in other parts of the United Kingdom and beyond. Parents and carers are very supportive of the school and readily play an active part in events such as international week and music festivals. They benefit from regular newsletters and access to the school's website.

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	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Good leadership and management make certain that detailed planning takes very good account of children's starting points. The school has successfully reviewed planning to match the needs of all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the significant proportion of children who are the early stages of learning English as an additional language. Consequently, well-planned topics ensure all areas of learning are covered with a particular focus on reading, speaking, listening, writing, and number skills. Staff give closely targeted support to teacher-initiated activities and those which children choose for themselves. However, the school recognises the need to give greater attention to activities that encourage independent working.

Children happily move from one activity to another. They listen attentively, play together very well, and thoroughly enjoy participating in a wide range of stimulating activities. New experiences, both indoors and outdoors, captivate children so they make good progress in all areas of learning and especially communication. As a result, children settle quickly, are eager to learn and are well prepared for entry to 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 response rate was higher than usual and almost all questionnaires were positive. The few written comments expressed considerable satisfaction with the school. These included positive remarks about the caring and supportive environment, the support for children's individual needs and the effectiveness of leadership.

A very small minority of parents and carers recorded reservations over a very small number of issues, including the level of communication. These reservations were not reflected in the very large majority of comments and the inspection found evidence to indicate that the school's newsletters and web site provide detailed information for parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Philip Howard 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 174 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 346 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	101	58	70	40	3	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	96	55	74	43	4	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	75	43	88	51	7	4	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	67	39	100	57	6	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	78	45	89	51	3	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	72	41	88	51	12	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	77	44	94	54	1	1	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)	62	36	89	51	9	5	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	63	36	95	55	12	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	66	38	79	45	16	9	4	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	63	36	91	52	9	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	87	50	78	45	4	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	95	55	74	43	4	2	0	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.



24 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Philip Howard Catholic Primary School, Hatfield, AL10 8NN

We very much enjoyed our visit to your school and thank you for making us feel so welcome. This letter is to tell you about some of the things we found while we were with you. Yours is a good school that serves your local community well. You are good at helping to make the school run smoothly and help people in the local community. You told us it is also a place where you want to be, make lots of friends, and enjoy taking part in the many interesting clubs and activities.

Here are some more important things about your school.

You make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress in lessons and you enjoy your work.

Your work often shows creativity and imagination.

You are extremely considerate towards each other.

Staff take exceptionally good care of you, and make sure that you know exactly what to do to keep safe.

You have a good understanding of what makes for a healthy lifestyle and healthy eating.

This is what your school has been asked to do to make things even better.

Make sure that lessons are taught at a good pace and challenge you all to think really hard.

Improve your writing by giving you more opportunities to write for different purposes, not only in English lessons but in other subjects as well.

You can help by continuing to work hard at the tasks and activities you are given. We wish each one of you every success in your future education and hope that you continue to enjoy learning as much as you do now.

Yours sincerely

Paul Canham

Lead 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. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.