

Holy Cross Roman Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118198
Local Authority	Isle of Wight
Inspection number	339163
Inspection dates	4–5 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Michael Pye

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	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	141
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Nigel Blair
Headteacher	Mr Martin Lee
Date of previous school inspection	4 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited six lessons, three part lessons and had discussions with governors, staff, pupils, and parents. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including school plans and policies, assessments and the tracking of pupils' progress. In addition, 87 parental questionnaires, 57 pupils' questionnaires and 16 staff questionnaires were scrutinised. , and

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

- what school recording and tracking documents show about the learning and progress of different pupil groups, taking into account their starting points
- how effective the teaching of writing across the school is, and whether assessment is used well enough to plan sufficiently challenging work for pupils of different abilities
- how well pupils know how to improve their work and the impact of the new marking policy
- how effectively leaders, at all levels, monitor and evaluate the outcomes for pupils, plan and use these to drive improvement.

Information about the school

Pupils in this smaller than average primary school are predominantly from a White British background and a lower than average proportion speak English as an additional language. Not all come from Catholic backgrounds. The numbers of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. Provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage is delivered in the Reception class.

The school has Healthy Schools status, the ICT Quality Mark and is an eco-school, recognised for recycling. The current headteacher is taking 'phased retirement' with the deputy headteacher acting as headteacher for one day each week. The school is due to expand as part of the island's reorganisation plans.

There is independently run pre-school provision on the school's site.

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

The school provides a good education for its pupils. It has outstanding features in aspects of pupils' personal development including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and in their care, guidance and support. Under the very good leadership of the headteacher, high academic standards have been maintained, while at the same time realising the school's commitment to the spiritual and pastoral well-being of the pupils. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding and they have very positive attitudes to their work. They speak warmly of feeling safe, of the friendships they have and the ongoing support they receive from the adults in the school.

Children enter Reception generally meeting the learning expectations for their age. They, and pupils throughout the school, benefit from good teaching and this contributes to pupils achieving well. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress. At the end of Year 2, the standards attained are consistently above average. This picture is maintained through Years 3 and 4 and pupils leave the school with above average standards in English, mathematics and science.

Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle, recognised in a national award. They speak of the advantages of a healthy diet, are eager to access the various activities at breaks and lunchtimes, and thoroughly enjoy the sports activities on offer, including golf.

Teaching and learning, including that of writing, are good. Very positive relationships are established in class with the result that pupils want to do well and be involved in their learning. Teaching assistants are well briefed on their role and, consequently, provide effective support for pupils. Their proactive approach enables those pupils who find learning difficult to be fully included in lessons. There is a degree of inconsistency in how effectively teachers plan work for pupils of different abilities. At times, their planning is too focused on the task to be undertaken rather than the learning expected of pupils, so that progress slows. Pupils' enjoyment of learning is a result of lessons that are described by pupils as 'fun' while 'hard'.

The curriculum is good and contributes well to these enjoyment levels. Pupils study archaeology, visit local places of interest, and have good opportunities to take part in 'living' history, for example as Victorians. The benefits of being a relatively small school are maximised; adults know the pupils and their pastoral needs extremely well.

Leadership and management are good overall. Monitoring has identified very relevant areas for development. For example, pupils' writing and teachers' marking were seen as areas that could be improved. More opportunities for pupils to write meaningfully and across the curriculum have been introduced and, consequently, standards are

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improving. The pupils speak of the helpfulness of the 'bubble and box' approach to marking which gives them a clear idea of how to improve their work. This reflects the continuing good capacity of the school to maintain improvement.

Teachers also benefit from good guidance and support from leaders who monitor lessons. However, the school acknowledges the need to extend their focus in observations to include a greater emphasis on the quality of learning for different pupil groups. The accommodation and resources within the school are good, although if children's learning and progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage are to be maximised there is a need to further develop the rather limited outside area.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Promote the focus on learning through:
 - ensuring that in all teachers' planning the specific learning needs of different groups of pupils are identified and that, consequently,
 - appropriately challenging work is set for pupils
 - ensuring that when managers monitor lessons the quality of pupils' learning is to the forefront of their analysis and feedback
 - Enhance the learning of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage through continuing to develop the outside area.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils achieve well from their starting points. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 show that standards in reading, writing and mathematics are above average. Good teaching ensures that pupils make good progress. In a Year 3 drama lesson, designed to support pupils' learning in history, pupils responded well to the opportunities to develop 'statues' reflecting Boudicca's fearsome reputation. Similarly, pupils' independent thinking was very well promoted in a group session led by the teacher during a mathematics lesson. Good open-ended questions and guidance encouraged pupils to think for themselves about possible patterns in their work. Progress slows when, in some lessons, the teacher's use of questioning does not sufficiently challenge pupils' understanding.

Pupils feel very safe, not least because of the school's work in promoting their awareness of safety issues. The school council, for example, carried out a very thorough health and safety inspection of the school, producing a written file, well illustrated with photographs of certain areas. One parent told of their child talking animatedly of the need for smoke alarms to be maintained at home after their work in school about fire prevention. Pupils show a very healthy respect for each other. Older pupils are outstandingly conscientious about 'buddying' the younger children. They contribute extremely well to the community when, for example, responding to the need for recycling, for which they have won a national award. Their outstanding awareness of the differing needs of others is demonstrated through their charity fundraising. The

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above average standards of basic skills, including information and communication technology (ICT), help prepare pupils well for their later life, although more experience of organising, financing and managing activities would further enhance this preparation.

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	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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

In the good and better lessons pupils settle quickly to their work because they have a clear understanding of what they are expected to learn. These lessons have pace because they are well prepared and organised effectively. The interactive whiteboards are well used to motivate pupils. Other resources address the need to meet the different ways in which pupils learn. Some good use of assessment to plan suitably challenging work for pupils of different abilities was observed. However, on occasions, teachers' planning is too task-orientated rather than focused on the learning expected of different pupil groups. Where this happens, progress dips. Very good use is made of ICT passports to encourage pupils to self-assess their progress.

The good curriculum provides a wide range of activities that help motivate pupils. The introduction of an arts morning has resulted in an increased level of enjoyment for

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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pupils, evidenced by the attractive and varied array of work on display around the school. Visitors, such as the story teller, add significantly to pupils' learning, while residential visits promote the social and team-building skills of pupils extremely well. Such positive enhancement of the curriculum also extends to the provision for the emotional health of pupils. They say they enjoy religious education and the other opportunities they have, in circle time for example, to discuss matters of interest. While pupils are encouraged to work independently and to use and develop their different skills, curriculum planning does not always allow for this. The delivery of critical skills is helping to encourage more independence of learning, although in some curriculum planning there is insufficient focus on what skills are to be taught and progression is not as clear as it might be.

Parents and pupils acknowledge the extremely caring and supportive ethos that exists. Pupils say they are respected and that the school takes account of their views. Robust child protection and other health and safety arrangements are fully in place. The work of the learning assistants helps ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are included and make similar progress to others. The school has established very effective links with a wide range of external specialists, including speech and language, which fully benefit pupils in need of further support.

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?

Staff morale is high and there is a shared motivation to deliver the best for the pupils. This message of high expectations and continuing improvement has been effectively communicated by the headteacher. Monitoring responsibilities are well shared amongst managers and lead to relevant areas for development being identified. For example, in mathematics, work scrutiny and observations highlighted the need for, and consequent introduction of, more problem-solving activities. Pupils say they enjoy these and that they are helping their understanding. Teaching observations take place and provide valuable guidance to aid improvement. However, there is insufficient attention given to the quality of learning of different pupil groups and, consequently, feedback is too focused on teaching styles.

Not all development plans sufficiently identify where subjects contribute to the overall school improvement plan, or show how their success can clearly be measured. Accurate tracking of pupils' progress reflects the commitment of the school to ensuring inclusion

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and equal opportunity for all pupils. The very good partnership with other local schools is promoting a closer analysis and use of assessment data through the further use of modern technology, but this is at an early stage of development. Community cohesion is well promoted through links with Montserrat and a mainland urban school, for example, although a more detailed analysis is required to show the impact of the school's work in this area. Partnerships with parents are positive, and they receive good information about what their children are learning. However, on occasions more guidance is required on just how they can support their children's learning.

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	2
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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter Reception with the expected levels of skills and knowledge for their age, although aspects of communication and calculation are weaker. The very good leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage helps ensure that they make good progress and thoroughly enjoy their learning. Effective induction procedures, which can include home visits, help children to settle quickly into school. Very positive relationships exist and all children benefit from the adults' extremely effective teamwork that ensures each day runs smoothly. Lessons take place in a calm environment where the children's independence is well developed. For example, two children were observed concentrating and persevering on a complex ICT exercise, while in another area children played a shapes game with enthusiasm and a good degree of cooperation and sharing. Teachers' planning clearly shows what children are expected to learn, and effective ongoing assessment helps ensure that children are challenged appropriately. The welfare needs of the children are paramount, with, for example, assistants carrying a first-aid kit

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outside in case of falls. While pupils are motivated by the natural outside environment, worms and bugs included, the outside area is limited in size and restricts physical activity, such as the use of climbing apparatus.

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 majority of parents are entirely happy and have full confidence in the work of the school. In their responses to the questionnaire, only one was not happy about their child's experience. There was full agreement that their children are safe in school, and the vast majority felt that their children enjoyed their learning experiences. There was almost full agreement that the school has effective leadership, and that children make good progress, are well prepared for the future and have their needs met. These views were shared by inspectors. Several parents spoke with an inspector and confirmed the very positive responses in the questionnaires, including that the school was open to parents and generally acted upon their views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Holy Cross Roman 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 87 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 141 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	55	63	32	37	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	67	77	20	23	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	41	47	37	43	5	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	42	48	32	37	7	8	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	50	57	29	33	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	46	53	37	43	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	58	67	27	31	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)	42	48	32	37	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	42	48	37	43	4	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	42	48	38	44	2	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	38	44	35	40	6	7	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	56	64	26	30	3	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	60	69	26	30	1	1	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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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.



6 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Holy Cross Roman Catholic Primary School, East Cowes, PO32 6AS

Thank you for welcoming us to your school during our recent visit. We listened carefully to what you had to say, and we agree with you that yours is a good school. It does some things very well indeed and you are right to be proud of it.

We especially liked the way in which you are growing into thoughtful, polite and extremely well behaved young people. The school is very good at helping you to develop into people who think for themselves. Your decision making about the uniform and the outdoor furniture are examples of this. We also liked the way you respect and help each other, for example when you listen in class while others give their views, and when the older pupils look after the younger children. Well done!

You progress well and your standard of work is above that normally expected for your age. You told us that teachers make lessons fun and we agree that the teaching is good. Your enjoyment of school is obvious and you certainly have a range of exciting things to do ' your visit to East Dene and its mud was mentioned!

You also told us how you feel safe in school and that the adults listen to you and respect you. We agree. All of the adults want the best for you. Your headteacher runs the school very well. Together with the other leaders in the school, he makes sure it runs smoothly. We have asked the school to look at two things:

- Improve the outdoor area for Reception children.
- Improve the way the school checks how well you are learning, and how teachers use that information when planning lessons to challenge all of you.

Thank you again for your help and, on behalf of my colleagues, I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Michael Pye

Lead Inspector

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