

Holy Family Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104454
Local authority	Knowsley
Inspection number	377083
Inspection dates	15–16 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Stephen Rowland

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	211
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	M Raymond
Headteacher	Janette Cook-Hannah
Date of previous school inspection	30 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 12 lessons and observed the work of seven teachers. They evaluated the school's work, and looked at relevant policies, the school development plan, minutes of meetings of the school's governing body, the school's monitoring records and analyses of pupils' attainment and progress. The 108 questionnaires returned by parents and carers were also analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How well the school ensures that all pupils, particularly boys, achieve their full potential in writing.
- How effectively the school ensures that engaging and stimulating teaching helps all pupils to make good or better progress.
- To what extent a varied and relevant curriculum meets the needs and interests of all pupils.
- To what extent leaders and managers at all levels, including the governing body, are involved in evaluating the school's development and planning for improvement.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized primary school. Almost all pupils come from a White British background and none speaks English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is close to that normally seen. The school has achieved many awards including: the Active Mark, Eco-Award, Investors in People and the International Schools Award. The deputy headteacher is currently seconded to another school and an acting deputy headteacher has taken her place for this school year.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding school. All staff and members of the governing body work together very effectively to ensure the best possible outcomes for pupils. Team-work is strong and there is a powerful sense of energy and optimism about what can be achieved. Supported by the governing body, staff set very high expectations for themselves and for pupils. Attainment has been high consistently in all key stages over recent years and all groups of pupils make outstanding progress throughout their time at Holy Family. The school has a calm and caring ethos where all are respected and valued. Behaviour is exemplary and staff, governors and pupils are aware of how they can contribute to the local community. Self-evaluation is thorough and leads to secure improvement-planning. Best practice in teaching is shared and staff are constantly seeking out ways to make pupils' learning even more engaging and stimulating. The issue raised at the time of the last inspection has been dealt with successfully. This, the school's outstanding outcomes and a determined drive to improve continually, demonstrates an outstanding capacity for sustained improvement.

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills which are generally in line with those expected for their age. Pupils reach levels of attainment which are high when compared with the national average by the time they complete Key Stage 2. This is due to first-rate teaching which is often innovative and always engaging. It also provides pupils with the skills needed to understand issues in depth and to debate their views in a mature and balanced way. In an outstanding Year 6 lesson, for example, pupils examined the possible causes of the recent riots in English cities and debated solutions with insight and passion. Assessment is used very effectively to secure learning but at times marking does not make the next steps of learning sufficiently clear. The curriculum is rich and varied. All pupils have the opportunity to take part in a residential experience in Years 4, 5 and 6. An impressive range of sporting activities, such as fencing and wheelchair basketball, is offered to them. Pupils enjoy school and attendance is consistently high. Pupils are very loyal to the school and actively support the school motto: 'Pray together, play together, learn together.' One typical comment was, 'Everyone looks after each other. Everyone helps.' Pupils appreciate the thought which goes into planning their lessons. One said, 'The teachers make lessons fun. We never know what is coming next!'

Many parents and carers expressed very positive views about the school. One wrote,

'The staff are fully committed to the pupils who benefit from their enthusiasm.' Many commented on the school's caring, family atmosphere. A typical comment was, 'The school has a warm, family atmosphere. Parents are kept up to date with progress.'

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teachers use marking consistently to direct pupils towards the next steps in their learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils respond very well to the many engaging and stimulating learning activities and consequently, make outstanding progress. They say how much they value their teachers' enthusiasm. One described lessons as, 'Fun, exciting, interesting, brilliant.' In a very successful literacy lesson, for example, Year 1 pupils discussed the contents of a 'magic sack' found on Prospero's island from Shakespeare's 'The Tempest.' They learnt about new letters and sounds and talked convincingly about the characters in the play.

The school has a rigorous system for tracking the progress of pupils and this shows that the pattern of outstanding attainment and progress is being maintained. Ambitious targets are set and staff and pupils generally achieve them. The school has acted effectively to ensure that all groups of pupils achieve equally well. Boys, for example, now achieve as well as girls in writing in Key Stage 2. The support and guidance offered to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is closely matched to their needs and, as a result, they make outstanding progress.

Pupils are polite and considerate. They understand the high standards that are expected of them and respond in a mature and responsible way. Their behaviour in and around the school is outstanding. Children are involved in a broad range of activities to improve the school and its local community. For example, they have worked tirelessly and effectively to improve road safety outside the school and to promote healthy lunch boxes. Many have taken part in performances at a nearby nursing home and others have been active supporters of the 'Clean-up Cronton' campaign. Pupils say they feel exceedingly safe in school and have a clear understanding of how to deal with potential risks. They talk convincingly, for example, about e-safety and why certain material on the internet is blocked in school. Attendance has been high for a number of years and pupils say that they attend school because they enjoy it so much. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They have a keen awareness and appreciation of the richness and diversity of the world around them and can talk perceptively about the causes and consequences of such events as the destruction of the World Trade Centre. Pupils are strongly aware of the importance of healthy lifestyles. A large majority of them attend one or more of the wide range of sports and game activities available.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

Taking into account:

1

Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
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	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is innovative and stimulating. Lessons are planned carefully to ensure a brisk pace of learning and pupils are continually challenged to extend their learning. Teachers and teaching assistants keep a close watch on pupils' progress and intervene to assist with any possible misconceptions. In an outstanding mathematics lesson, for example, Year 5 pupils were engaged in a series of games which extended their understanding of decimals. In this they were challenged and supported constantly by the teacher and the teaching assistant.

Assessment is used very effectively to support pupils' learning. Teachers have a thorough record of the progress individuals make and set challenging targets for them. Pupils understand these targets and work hard to achieve them. Marking is clear and supportive although at times it does not provide helpful direction towards the next steps of learning. Pupils regularly assess their own and their peers' work and develop a good understanding of how to support each other.

The curriculum is rich and varied. There is a strong focus on the development of basic language and numeracy skills so that achievement in these subjects is outstanding. The International Primary Curriculum provides pupils with a broad base of knowledge and understanding. This allows them to understand the links between such subjects as history and geography, and to develop a keen awareness of contemporary global and national issues. There is an impressive variety of sporting, musical and cultural activities. Pupils have benefitted from the Shakespearean theme which underpins much of the school's teaching this term. This links the work of each class to a particular play.

Pupils are offered outstanding care, guidance and support. The needs of those who are most vulnerable are assessed meticulously and very effective programmes of support are put in place. The learning mentor works closely with families to help remove barriers to learning and there are some telling examples of the effectiveness of this work. Attendance has risen steadily over recent years and is high compared with that of similar schools. Transition arrangements from pre-school settings and into local high schools are thorough and highly effective.

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

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides clear and purposeful leadership for the school. In this, she has the total support of an able and committed team of senior leaders. Teamwork is very strong and all staff work together to ensure the very highest standards of outcomes and provision. All are involved fully in evaluating the school's work and planning for improvement. Staff speak enthusiastically about what they are doing and how they plan for further improvements. There is a robust system for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and good practice is shared systematically. The school sets high targets for itself and for its pupils and these are normally achieved and often exceeded. Any previous gaps in performance, such as those in boys' and girls' writing, have closed rapidly. This, along with the cohesive and harmonious nature of the school community and the school's zero tolerance to racism, indicates that equality of opportunity is outstanding.

The work of the school is supported by an active and experienced governing body. This group has a varied, valuable expertise which is put to very good use. Members of the governing body are involved fully in the school's self-evaluation and are actively involved in its daily life. Governors are very well-informed and ask challenging questions of the school's leaders and managers.

Partnerships with parents and carers are highly productive. Many parents and carers say how welcome they feel in school and value the many activities which involve them directly in their children's learning. The parent-and-child workshops to improve the performance and confidence of pupils in mathematics have been highly successful. The school employs a variety of media to keep in touch with parents and carers such as e-mail, texting and through the school's website. The school benefits greatly from a broad range of partnerships with external organisations. An active partnership with Hope University helps pupils to understand how producers in other countries benefit from Fairtrade and has also helped the school to develop its wild life garden. The school's systems to ensure the safety and well-being of pupils are excellent. They include an appropriate focus on the suitability of staff and on the appointment of new staff. Through its partnerships with a number of local groups and schools, the school promotes community cohesion very effectively.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1

The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make outstanding progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and enter Year 1 having attained well above national expectations in several areas of learning. Relationships are very strong and children learn to socialise very well. They are encouraged and supported to understand the importance of remaining safe and healthy. Children, for example, learn to wash their own snack plates. They develop independence from the beginning of the reception year, choosing which activities to focus on and accessing their own snack.

There is a stimulating and welcoming learning environment both indoors and out. There are many interests which children can explore, such as the many magical features of the work of Prospero from 'The Tempest.' Assessment is rigorous and thorough and is used to inform the next steps of learning. Staff carry out a detailed analysis to identify strengths and further areas for development. Teaching is often inspirational with staff showing a willingness to take on new and innovative strategies. Behaviour is exemplary both during the focused activities on the carpet and when children choose their own activities.

The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding. There is a very strong sense of commitment and energy which is shared by all staff. This has helped to secure the recent improvements in outdoor provision and the developing close working practice with the Year 1 class. Parents and carers are given a broad range of opportunities to contribute to their children's learning. For example, 'learning stories' which outline each child's development are e-mailed to parents and carers so that they can take an active role in them. Tracking and monitoring are rigorous so that planning for further improvements to provision is based on secure evidence and clear targets. Staff know what has to be done to improve further and are clear about how to tackle it.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

About half of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. This is well above average for primary schools. A very large majority of responses was positive and there were many very supportive comments. A very small minority of parents and carers felt that the school did not take account of their suggestions and concerns. There were also many positive comments about this aspect of the school's work in the questionnaire responses. Inspectors considered this aspect of the school's work through discussions with staff and pupils and through examining records of the school's contacts with parents and carers. During the inspection, no evidence was found to suggest that the school did not take account of the views and concerns of parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Holy Family 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 108 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 211 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	79	73	29	27	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	91	84	14	13	0	0	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	70	65	30	28	4	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	68	63	33	31	3	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	79	73	14	22	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	70	65	28	26	5	5	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	70	65	31	29	3	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)	70	65	28	26	2	2	2	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	71	66	29	27	3	3	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	70	65	25	23	6	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	61	56	34	31	7	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	82	76	18	17	3	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	88	81	17	16	3	3	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 all 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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 2010 to 08 April 2011 and is consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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 up exactly to 100. Sixth-form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



19 September 2011

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Holy Family Catholic Primary School, Widnes, WA8 5DW

Thank you for making us so welcome during our recent visit to Holy Family. We were particularly grateful to those of you who agreed to give up part of your lunch break to meet us. Also, thank you to those of you who completed the questionnaire. All your responses were very useful.

Holy Family is an outstanding school. We were very impressed by many things. Your behaviour is mature and considerate. We admired the way you respected other pupils, staff and the school building. Your teachers provide you with enjoyable and interesting lessons and because of this you all make excellent progress. You are very active in your local community and the people of Cronton value your work to improve it. For example, your contribution to the 'Clean-up Cronton' campaign is greatly appreciated.

Your teachers assess your progress very well and use this information to plan for the next steps of learning. Marking is thorough but does not always explain clearly enough what you will be learning next. We felt that this would help you to learn even more.

Yours is a calm and safe school and we were pleased to hear how you feel very safe and know how to keep healthy.

You are right to feel proud of your school. Please help your teachers by continuing to behave so well, by always trying your best and by helping each other. Once again, thank you for your kindness and help.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Rowland
Lead Inspector

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