

# Holy Rood Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	127416
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	364011
<b>Inspection dates</b>	21–22 June 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jenny Batelen

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	484
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jackie Elliott
<b>Headteacher</b>	Evelyn Ward
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 March 2008
<b>School address</b>	Greenbank Road Watford WD17 4FS
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. They observed 22 lessons and 15 teaching staff. Inspectors held meetings with representatives of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at documents including the school improvement plan, safeguarding and welfare arrangements, and records of pupils' progress. Inspectors also analysed questionnaires from staff, pupils and 163 parents and carers.

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

- How consistent is the quality of teaching across the school and how does this contribute to the outcomes for all pupils?
- How well is assessment used to ensure that pupils make good or better progress?
- How effective are links across the curriculum in developing pupils' learning?

## Information about the school

Holy Rood Catholic Primary School is larger than average. It serves the town of Watford. Although the majority of pupils are of White British heritage the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is greater than for most schools. The proportion of pupils whose first language is not English is close to the national average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average as is the proportion of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises a 60-place Nursery and two Reception classes. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools award, Artsmark and Basic Skills award.

The breakfast club and after-school club on site are privately run and were inspected separately at the same time as the school.

**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

Pupils love coming to this outstanding school. They are very proud of Holy Rood Catholic Primary, of its spiritual awareness and culture, and they feel privileged to be part of the community. The headteacher and her senior leadership team are exceptionally good at promoting the pupils' spiritual and moral development. Pupils' excellent behaviour makes a very strong contribution to this positive ethos. Pupils are very thoughtful towards each other. They understand what is expected of them and are very polite and welcoming to visitors. 'Behaviour is outstanding and if anyone "monkeys around" it gets sorted out quickly,' was one pupil's comment. Parents and carers value the school very highly and speak of the 'happy environment' of the school. 'He could not have had a better start to his academic career, it is a truly wonderful school,' is representative of the many positive comments from parents and carers.

Pupils make outstanding progress throughout the school and leave at the end of Year 6 with standards that are consistently well above the national average. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make excellent progress because of the focused and planned support they receive which enables them to access the curriculum fully. Teachers plan very effectively, taking note of the needs of all pupils. They ensure that pupils enjoy lively lessons often making strong links across the curriculum, particularly in English and mathematics, so that learning is relevant. Information and communication technology skills are well honed and often used effectively in a range of subjects. However, in a few classes, the well-developed skills that pupils have in English, mathematics and information and communication technology are not used consistently in all areas of the curriculum and, hence, opportunities are sometimes missed to improve these skills even further.

There is outstanding care for all pupils and their families. This includes support for families at particularly difficult times, and parents and carers value this. 'The atmosphere is caring, nurturing and stimulating,' and 'I cannot praise the staff enough for the emotional support given,' are comments reflecting the views of parents and carers.

The governing body and school leaders have implemented many changes in recent years, not least improvements to the buildings which have greatly enhanced the provision. Self-evaluation is an ongoing process involving all stakeholders. Improvements since the previous inspection, particularly in attendance which is now high, and the planned areas for further improvement demonstrate that the school has an outstanding capacity to improve.

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## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve progress for all pupils by ensuring that teachers provide even more opportunities for pupils to use their English, mathematics and information and communication technology skills in all areas of the curriculum

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**1**

Pupils enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skill levels just below those expected for their age. They make outstanding progress throughout the school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language play a full part in the life of the school. As a result, progress for these pupils is as good as their peers and they often exceed national averages for similar pupils in their outcomes for English and mathematics. Pupils talk very confidently about their work and they know how well they have done. During the inspection, pupils in Year 1 enjoyed writing 'star' sentences and 'wow' words and knew how to use these to improve their work. A group of pupils in Year 4 very sensitively discussed the book they were sharing and were able to empathise with all the characters. Pupils in Year 5 reflected together on a saying of Ghandi and then shared their aspirations for the school community. The Basic Skills award reflects the fact that most pupils demonstrate their high-level basic skills across the curriculum. They particularly enjoy the whole-school topics, such as 'One World' and 'Take One Picture', and share a clear understanding of the issues and ideas that these themes create.

Pupils are very confident that they are helped to learn how to keep themselves safe both in school and at home. They are confident that the school has equipped them to deal with unacceptable behaviour, and are equally confident that there is no bullying. Peer mediators help pupils to sort out issues that may arise and adults are always available to listen and help.

Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves healthy, as reflected in the Healthy Schools award. They understand the importance of exercise and the right food, and older pupils understand the need for mental health. 'Worry Boxes' in every class give pupils opportunities to share any concerns, and they know they will be listened to and helped to resolve the difficulties. The school gives plenty of opportunity for sporting activities and also directs pupils to outside clubs and training to extend their skills. As a result of this, a few pupils have achieved well at a national level.

Pupils contribute strongly to the life of the school and take responsibility through such roles as members of the school council, eco warriors, librarians and peer mediators. Pupils raise money for charities and choose the focus for these. They take the lead in sponsoring a pupil in Rwanda. They are strongly involved in the local community through inter-school sports events, singing in the local community and very strong links with the church.

Pupils understand and appreciate the varying cultures represented in their own school, with the common bond of the Catholic faith. They have a strong understanding of ethical issues facing the world with a strong lead from the eco warriors on developing a sustainable lifestyle. Pupils have a range of opportunities to develop their appreciation of art and music through curriculum themes, visits and visitors, the school choir and instrumental lessons. The Artsmark recognises the work done to promote art skills and understanding.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	1
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	1
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	1
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

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

## How effective is the provision?

The well-organised and imaginative curriculum means that pupils are inspired by exciting topics and varied approaches to learning. All teaching is at least good and there is evidence of much outstanding practice throughout the school. Teachers have a very good understanding of pupils' needs because of effective assessment procedures. They provide clear learning objectives and success criteria which pupils are encouraged to use to assess their own work. The consistently applied marking code means that all pupils are able to identify where they have succeeded and where they can make improvements. As a result, they talk about their work very confidently and understand how to improve it further. Teaching assistants are highly valued as part of the teaching team and give skilled, targeted support for individuals and groups of pupils.

The constant use of the outdoor environment enriches many areas of learning as shown when pupils learn to use the correct measuring tools such as trundle wheels, explore for minibeasts and learn to use data-logging equipment to test the intensity of light to find the best place to grow vegetables. Learning activities are often presented in the form of problems that give relevance to the task in hand. Pupils in Year 6 learnt about percentages through a 'banking' problem related to the current history focus on the musical 'Annie' and their study of the 1930s and also understood how this scenario relates to the current world financial situation.

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The school places a high priority on the care of its pupils and ensures that outside help is available to support pupils with particular needs. The school counsellors are greatly valued by families as they help to address emotional needs, including bereavement issues. The school is tenacious in seeking support for any pupils with particular learning, social and/or emotional needs so that they can make the best of their time in school. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of education at whatever level. Thorough induction procedures and strong links with the secondary school make transition a positive experience.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

The school's leaders have embedded the vision of 'the four Rs' of 'Respect, Respond, Reflect, and Resilience' and these key words are referred to frequently by staff and pupils to guide their thoughts and actions. Challenging targets are set which, coupled with high expectations, lead to outstanding outcomes. There are robust systems for tracking, monitoring and analysing progress through lesson observations and performance management processes. An effective mentoring system has ensured that the quality of teaching and learning is continually improving.

The outstanding governing body is rigorous in its challenge and support and so is able to make an exceptional contribution to the work of the school. Now, as a result of recent restructuring, it gives even more effective challenge to the school. Governors with specific subject areas to focus on link with subject leaders on a regular basis. Governors share the task of understanding and identifying effective practice with the headteacher and attend training in order to develop their skills. The governing body is very clear about its role in ensuring that safeguarding practice is highly effective. Governors worked closely with the headteacher during recent ongoing building works to monitor and increase security, when necessary, to ensure that only suitable people were on site. An induction pack for new staff ensures that they understand their role in safeguarding pupils.

Equality of opportunity is at the heart of what the school does. The school gives a lot of support to pupils whose current circumstances have made them vulnerable and ensures that none miss out on school activities for any reason. As a result, there is no unevenness in outcomes for different groups of pupils and there is no discrimination.

The views and ideas of parents and carers are gained through questionnaires and a weekly 'headteacher's surgery'. Newsletters keep them informed about school activities and there is high parental satisfaction with the work of the school. Governors know parents and carers well and keep the contact strong through discussions on the

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playground and/or phone calls. Strong partnerships with a range of agencies and other schools enable the school to broaden the pupils' experiences as well as ensuring the appropriate support for vulnerable pupils.

Community cohesion is very strong. Pupils are involved and understand their role in the local community through 'community' days, visits to homes for the elderly, and church and diocesan links. There are links with schools across the country to help develop pupils' appreciation of the range of experiences for children within the United Kingdom. The sponsorship of a child in Rwanda and their growing understanding of that country give pupils a strong awareness of the global community.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Strong leadership, excellent relationships and a thorough understanding of the needs of children in Early Years Foundation Stage mean that progress for all children in both the Nursery and Reception classes is at least good. As a result, children enter Key Stage 1 with attainment just above average in all areas of learning. Very clear assessment procedures mean that staff know the children very well. Assessments influence the planning, and staff ensure that children are given the opportunity to develop the next steps in their learning.

Parents and carers value the children's introduction to school. They feel that their children make good progress and that they are well informed. 'He is having a great time at nursery... his confidence is growing every day,' reflects many positive comments from parents and carers of early years children.

Children's choices are a strong influence in the day-to-day running of the Early Years Foundation Stage. There are opportunities for all areas of learning to be developed in the

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very well-equipped outside area, which is in constant use. Children choose from a wide range of activities and are encouraged to sustain concentration and be 'busy bees, rather than butterflies'. A recent trip to a farm has excited the children about animals and, as a result, all current work has an animal focus. For example, mathematics activities involve sorting animals, and a writing activity results from acting out 'animals escaping'. At the instigation of the children, the woodland area has been changed to a place where children can wear animal masks and act out plays. 'We are doing everything about animals and I love it!' was the comment from one child.

Children lead a very active and healthy lifestyle, and hygiene routines are reinforced. They are kept very safe because of site security and observation from adults, and are also helped to understand how to keep themselves safe. Behaviour is excellent. They work well together, undertake some tasks of responsibility and are involved in school fundraising.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>1</b>
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 of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

## Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are very supportive of the school and the returned questionnaires were overwhelmingly positive. Parents and carers praise the support given to their children and families and the approachability of the staff. They value the progress their children make. Inspection evidence endorsed these views.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Holy Rood 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 163 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 484 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	101	62	59	36	2	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	106	65	55	34	1	1	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	45	28	107	66	7	4	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	65	40	86	53	7	4	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	84	52	76	47	2	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	72	44	79	48	7	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	85	52	74	45	4	2	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	38	89	55	4	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	61	37	94	58	4	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	46	28	101	62	9	6	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	44	27	109	67	5	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	83	51	74	45	4	2	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	105	65	53	33	3	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 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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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 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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



23 June 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Holy Rood Catholic Primary School, Watford, WD17 4FS**

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. Thank you, also, to those of you who returned questionnaires about your school. We thoroughly enjoyed joining in your lessons, including the outside sessions, talking to you and sharing your books with you. Here are some of the things we found out about your school.

You are very proud of your school and of your strong spiritual and moral awareness.

You work hard and reach high standards by the time you leave the school.

You behave very well and look after each other.

You enjoy school a lot and feel very safe, knowing that all the adults care a lot about you.

You appreciate chances to improve the school and to help others in this country and in the wider world.

You feel that your teachers do a lot to help you with your work.

Your school is outstanding overall and we have asked your headteacher and the governors to do one thing to make it even better. This is:

- to help you all make even better progress by making sure that you always have opportunities to use your English, mathematics and information and communication technology skills in all subjects of the curriculum

You can help by making sure you continue to enjoy school, behave well and always try your best in all lessons.

Yours sincerely

Jenny Batelen

Lead inspector

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