



# The Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 111321  
**LEA** Halton  
**Inspection number** 278655  
**Inspection dates** 15 March 2006 to 15 March 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mr Michael Cladingbowl HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to inspect any school in England. The inspection is to be treated as a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Cotterill
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Halton Brook
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11		Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 2NL
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01928 563148
<b>Number on roll</b>	118	<b>Fax number</b>	01928 566792
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mrs Barbara Burgess
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	19 June 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Dominic Hemington

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools. During the inspection, lessons were visited, a range of documents was scrutinised, and meetings were held with pupils, staff, governors and representatives of the local authority and the diocese. Around a third of parents returned a questionnaire and these views were taken into account.

## Description of the school

This is a small primary school with a distinct Catholic ethos. It serves an area of Runcorn that has considerable social and economic disadvantage. Most pupils are from a white British background and none speak English as an additional language. Nearly a third of pupils are eligible for a free school meal and a similar proportion has learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A significant number of pupils have emotional or behavioural difficulties. Three pupils have a statement of special educational need. Some pupils are taught in mixed-age classes. Since 2001, the school has been part of an Education Action Zone. In 2004 and in 2006, the school was accredited as a 'Healthy School'.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school that provides outstanding value for money. Inspirational leadership and heedful management have created conditions in which teachers' enthusiasm, and excellent care and support help all pupils and their learning to flourish. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good and there is ample capacity to sustain the current high level of performance.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and they behave very well. Expectations are high and many pupils overcome considerable social and other difficulties to achieve outstanding results. Lively and enthusiastic teaching helps pupils to learn rapidly and to persevere when they face difficulties. Writing is taught particularly well, although in Year 3 the pupils are not making as much progress in this area as they do in other years. Most parents are rightly very pleased with the support and teaching that is provided.

Assessment is used particularly well to promote learning and checks on pupils' progress are frequent. Recent changes to the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 curriculum have increased pupils' enjoyment and improved their achievement; these changes are to be extended into Key Stage 2. Overall, this is a happy and high achieving school.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 1

Attainment on entry to the school is well below average, and although pupils make good progress in the Foundation Stage their literacy and numeracy skills still need considerable attention by the time they start Year 1. Their development in some of the other areas, for example personal and social, creative and physical, and in their knowledge and understanding of the world, is much closer to the standard expected for their age.

This good progress is maintained in Years 1 and 2, and weaknesses are identified and tackled systematically. Although the standards reached by pupils at the end of Year 2 vary widely, depending on their level of prior attainment, nearly all pupils make rapid progress.

By the end of Key Stage 2, this good progress has been maintained and, in most cases, accelerated, particularly in Years 5 and 6. In 2005, nearly all pupils achieved the expected Level 4 in English, mathematics and science and nearly a half achieved the higher Level 5 in writing. These were outstanding results and among the very best in the country, taking the pupils' low starting points into consideration. Achievement in writing, apart from in Year 3, is a particular strength of the school.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress and many do even better than this, as do the most able pupils. Pupils know what they are expected to achieve and achievement targets are regularly met or exceeded. As one pupil said, 'lots of us came to this school and we have done really well.'

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils are very keen to come to school. They work very hard in nearly all lessons and most involve themselves in a wide range of extracurricular activities. During playtimes, they are active and take part in games that promote physical exercise and encourage cooperation. Many are eager to take on responsibility; for example, Year 6 pupils act as play leaders and support younger pupils around the school. In and out of lessons, pupils are routinely rewarded for good behaviour, positive attitudes and for showing respect to others. Attendance is good.

Pupils have a very clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong, and this helps them make informed choices when faced with difficult decisions. During the inspection, they behaved impeccably around the school and the very few instances of fidgety behaviour that occurred in lessons were dealt with swiftly and sensitively by teachers. The great skill of teachers in dealing calmly with potentially difficult situations has helped the pupils to learn to manage their own emotions and behaviour. All year groups within the school are represented on the school council, and this elected body has contributed much to developing and promoting healthier lifestyles within school. The majority of pupils know what it means to eat a balanced diet and many make good choices as to what to eat at lunchtime.

Circle time and collective acts of worship are important occasions in the life of the school and give pupils time to reflect about themselves and their lives. A comprehensive personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) programme prepares them for later life, and they know how to stay safe. Pupils are keen fundraisers, both locally and nationally, and make a notable contribution to the local Catholic and to the wider community. Vibrant displays and a well planned curriculum give the pupils some understanding of other cultures and traditions.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

Teaching and learning are usually good and often outstanding. Teachers work very hard. They have very good subject knowledge and this helps to enthuse and excite pupils, who in turn are very eager to learn. Planning is comprehensive and takes full account of the needs of different individuals and groups. Consequently, different groups of pupils are well catered for. Learning is usually very well managed and this pre-empts any behavioural difficulties. Teaching assistants are very effective in supporting teaching and learning and assist groups of pupils and individuals; they make a real difference to learning both in lessons and through the intervention activities they run. Lessons seen during the inspection were often lively and usually fun.

Parents are encouraged to become active partners in their child's learning and there is a range of activities to support parents in this role. They appreciate the quality of

teaching provided by the school. One parent commented about her daughter: 'All teaching staff work hard. Her needs are being met and she is very happy in school and making good progress.'

These views are borne out by other inspection evidence: the work in the pupils' books shows progress that is consistently good or better, and the consistently high quality of teaching has resulted in outstanding achievement for many pupils.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

A broad and balanced curriculum meets the pupils' needs. Understandably, there is a strong focus on the development of basic skills, particularly at Key Stage 2, but some innovations to the curriculum in the Reception/Year 1 and Year 1/Year 2 classes have led to greater enjoyment and even better achievement, and there are considered plans to develop this into Key Stage 2. The formal curriculum is enhanced and extended by cross-curricular projects, including for example recent work on Africa and the American Civil War. Special events are organised as a result of other initiatives, such as the girls' information and communication technology club. There is a reasonable range of extracurricular activities, including sports and other clubs. Year 6 pupils attend a week long residential visit and swimming lessons are offered throughout Key Stage 2. The programme of PSCE is taught well and contributes considerably to the personal development of the pupils.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well. Where needed, they are given intensive help by suitably qualified and experienced staff. Statutory requirements are met in relation to pupils with a statement of special educational need.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

This is another strength of the school. There are very high levels of care shown to all pupils, and to staff, and this makes a marked contribution to its strong ethos. Pupils feel they are valued and they know who to turn to if they have any difficulties. Vulnerable pupils, or those in need, are given particular attention and regular checks are made on their progress. One pupil commented: 'A boy in our class never used to have any friends, but our teacher sorted it out and now he's got lots.'

The school benefits from very effective cooperation with other agencies and this helps to make sure that pupils receive support when they need it most. Support is targeted carefully and its impact is measured thoughtfully. The use of a common form for inter-agency assessment when pupils are at risk is exemplary practice. Suitable arrangements for safeguarding pupils are in place.

The use of assessment to promote learning and improve achievement is outstanding. Checks on the pupils' progress are frequent and regular, and teachers have a detailed grasp of what each pupil needs to learn next. This information is used very carefully to plan the next steps in learning. Marking is thorough.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 1

A shared vision, based on Catholic values, and strong sense of purpose permeate this school. Robust but consultative leadership, both thoughtful and persuasive, provides a clear educational direction and expectations are high. Pupils perform highly in relation to their low starting point upon entry to the school as a result of very effective teaching, searching and careful checks on pupils' progress, very high levels of support, and the positive and hard working atmosphere that exists in the school. The school runs smoothly day-to-day.

Arrangements for checking and reporting on the quality of teaching and learning are rigorous, and involve middle managers and governors. Where weaknesses in performance are identified, they are acted on quickly and teachers benefit from very good support from senior staff. Staff are provided with suitable training.

Responsibility for subject leadership and coordination is distributed widely. There is a strong team spirit in the school and all staff, teaching and non-teaching, work together very well. Relationships are warm and friendly throughout. The Foundation Stage is led and managed very effectively. Creative use is made of the available accommodation and resources.

Pupils' and parents' views are sought frequently and acted on. Relationships between school and parents are characterised by integrity and mutual respect, although not all parents are able to take part in the many activities organised by the school.

Governors work hard and are committed to improving the school. They meet regularly and have established a sound system for offering support and advice. Finances are kept on a sound footing. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Overall, this school offers outstanding value for money.

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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	1	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	1	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	NA

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

### **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

I enjoyed visiting your school. I want you to know how much I enjoyed meeting you and I would like to say a special 'thank you' to all of you who spoke to me at play time and lunchtime.

You are very lucky to go to such an outstanding school and your school is very lucky to have you! You behaved excellently when I was in the school and I saw many of you being helpful and kind to one another. I also saw you working very hard for your teachers and because of this nearly all of you are doing very well indeed. You can be proud of this.

You can also be proud of your teachers, the other staff, the governors, and your parents. All of them are working together to help you grow up safely and happily. I think you can be especially proud of your headteacher and deputy headteacher. They are doing a very special job in making sure that you all reach for the stars and do the best that you can.

To help with this, I have asked them to make sure that you all get the best possible help with your writing, and that all lessons are made as interesting and as fun as possible.