

Holy Cross RC School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100345
Local Authority	Hammersmith and Fulham
Inspection number	307367
Inspection date	8 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Keith Sadler

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	247
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	66
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr S Guest
Headteacher	Mr G Mulligan
Date of previous school inspection	13 September 2004
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Basuto Road London SW6 4BL
Telephone number	020 7736 1447
Fax number	020 7371 9954

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). In addition, the following issues were investigated.

- Why are standards not as high in science as they are in English and mathematics?
- What is the quality of the school's curriculum?
- How strong are the school's procedures to secure good attendance?

Evidence was gathered from the school's analysis of pupils' progress, a scrutiny of samples of their work and observations of pupils in lessons. Discussions were held with staff, governors and pupils. In addition, the responses of parents' questionnaires were analysed and their comments taken into account. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Holy Cross RC School is an average sized primary school. It is one-form entry and very heavily oversubscribed. The EYFS consists of a Nursery class, which children attend on a part-time basis, and a Reception class. The Nursery class provides for children from a wider geographical area than that for admission into the school from the Reception class onwards. Hence many children leave at the end of the Nursery year and a significant minority of children enter at the beginning of the Reception year. There are breakfast and after school clubs that that managed by the governors.

About a half of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. This is well above the national average. A significant number of minority ethnic groups is represented in the school, the largest of which is of French heritage. Six pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. Most of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties or speech, language and communication difficulties.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Holy Cross is a good school. It has some significant strengths. Central to these is the exceptionally high level of care and support that all the adults provide. This, when linked to the overwhelmingly family and community atmosphere, ensures that pupils thrive in their personal development. Consequently, pupils' personal development including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Parents are rightly effusive in their support for this aspect of the school. As one parent wrote, 'Holy Cross has equipped my children well, not only in the basic things, but in the knowledge that all are special and have individual talents. The school has taught my daughter to be independent and confident and to know right from wrong.' Another summed up the many positive views when stating 'The school has a wonderfully happy ethos. Our children are extremely happy in this fun and very caring learning environment. The teachers are enthusiastic and vibrant and this shines through every day.'

A number of parents also commented positively on the after-school club. This is exceptionally well organised as an integral part of the life of the school and provides a wide and rich range of activities in which children thrive. There are excellent links between the after-school club and the whole school curriculum because the activities provided are carefully organised to complement and supplement the school's curriculum. For example, children thoroughly enjoyed the Karate and information and communication technology (ICT) activities offered on the day of the inspection. Older pupils help and support younger children and they have a positive impact on the young children's learning. Pupils are immensely proud of their school and they enjoy lessons and learning. Personal relationships, behaviour and pupils attitudes are very positive. They have an excellent understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and are quick to point out that they have many opportunities to help to build and select the menus for school lunch. The resulting healthy and nutritious meals results in every pupil in the school having a hot school meal every day.

Achievement is good because the quality of teaching and learning and the curriculum are good. Teachers' skilful questioning of pupils, for example, contributes to their good progress because it directs their thinking. Children make good progress from their wide range of starting points in the EYFS and on entering Year 1 pupils' skills are above those typically found and almost all attain the learning goals expected for their age. Progress is good in Years 1 and 2 and, overall standards are significantly above average. However, there is some under-achievement of those pupils who find learning easy in the infant classes. As a result, few pupils gain the higher levels in national assessments, particularly in reading and writing.

Achievement is good in the junior classes especially in English and mathematics. The grouping of pupils by ability in mathematics is effective with teachers providing work that offers good challenge. The resulting standards at the end of Year 6 in mathematics, and English, are exceptionally high. In science, attainment is at the national average. In English and mathematics, a high proportion of pupils attain the higher level whereas in science it is an average number. The school recognised the need to accelerate progress in science. Good analysis of the school's curriculum and pupils' attainment revealed that there was a need to strengthen investigative and practical science. Resulting changes to the curriculum are having a positive impact and there are indications from tracking data that pupils' progress is starting to accelerate. Pupils who find learning difficult also make good progress because their learning needs are identified quickly and effective support is provided. Pupils enjoy the many opportunities that teachers provide for them to learn collaboratively. As well as helping to motivate and engage them, this

also supports the learning of pupils with speech and language difficulties. In consequence, these pupils make good progress. In addition, teachers take into account pupils' preferred ways of learning and their interests. As one pupil said, 'Our lessons are challenging and the teachers make us have to think hard and we like that.'

The curriculum is of good quality and has some outstanding aspects. Those pupils who have particular gifts and talents have opportunities to develop them both in and out of the school day. The school makes exceptionally good use of visits to enhance and enliven learning and all classes make frequent trips to galleries, museums and places of interest. In addition, all pupils from Year 2 onwards benefit from a residential visit. There is a good range of extra curricular activities particularly in the arts and sports. Curricular topics have been made interesting for pupils by ensuring that literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are planned into the topic cycle. However, the newly re-organised curriculum for science, that is now appropriately based on developing pupils' skills, needs to be embedded throughout all year groups.

Pupils' attendance improved in the last year and is now above the national average. The school has good arrangements to boost attendance and only authorises absences during term time for the celebration of religious festivals or pilgrimage. Nonetheless, some families take holidays during term time.

All these things do not happen by chance! It is the inspirational and visionary pastoral leadership of the headteacher that has led to a school that exudes such compassion and warmth. It results in the staff working very closely as a team, being very supportive of each other, and the exceptionally high staff morale. All are deeply committed to the school and its educational future. Leadership and management are good overall. In addition to the headteacher's outstanding pastoral leadership, he has a clear vision for pupils' academic development. The school has a full-time headteacher and associate headteacher. They work in close partnership together and they have developed good evaluation systems. These ensure that a close watch is maintained on the school's provision and pupils' progress. Accurate evaluations ensure that appropriate priorities for improvement are identified and rigorously pursued. Subject leaders play an important role in this and ensure that provision in their areas of responsibility is carefully monitored. There is very good leadership and management of the out-of-school care with a specific post having been created for this purpose for a senior member of staff. In addition, the school is closely responsive to the needs of the local community and good links have been made both with the two Catholic parishes that the school serves and also the local neighbourhood. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection particularly in the learning for children in the EYFS and this demonstrates a good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in the Nursery year because the capable leadership and management of the early years ensures that the curriculum is of good quality. They have access to a wide range of stimulating and enjoyable activities that promote their learning and development well. The safe and spacious outdoor provision is used well to facilitate children's play sessions such as the imaginative re-creation of the 'Three Little Pigs'. The well-resourced indoor learning environment enhances children's play opportunities and social skills development.

A number of children joining the school at the beginning of the Reception year do not have skills that are as developed as those typically found for their age, particularly in the

communication, language and literacy area of learning. However, achievement is good in the Reception year, and children make good progress as a direct result of their access to a rich and stimulating learning environment. By the time that children leave the EYFS almost all attain the expected goals and a significant minority exceed them.

Children are safe and secure and are well supported by the dedicated staff. The good induction systems, the positive partnership with parents and external agencies contribute significantly to ensuring that the needs of all children are effectively addressed. Children are confident and articulate and undertake the enjoyable activities with enthusiasm. They enjoy each other's company and work well independently and in groups. Behaviour is exemplary during lessons and at playtimes. Safeguarding and promotion of children's welfare is a priority in this caring and supportive school. Policies and procedures are followed through into effective practice to keep children safe and well protected. Children are safe and well supervised at all times during activities and playtime. Staff work hard to ensure that activities are matched well to children's individual needs which facilitates their good progress towards the achievement of the early learning goals.

Regular assessment and tracking of children's progress by the leader and the staff team ensures that areas for development are identified and are used as a basis for planning subsequent activities for the children, thereby ensuring their continuous progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards at the end of Year 2 particularly for pupils that find learning easy.
- Accelerate progress and raise standards in science in the junior classes by embedding the new curricular arrangements for the subject.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

21 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Holy Cross RC School, London, SW6 4BL

Thank you so much for making us welcome and for talking with us when we visited your school. We enjoyed finding out about Holy Cross. Please would you also thank your parents for sending the questionnaires back.

We agree with you and your parents that yours is a good school and it has some outstanding strengths. You work hard and your achievement is good. We enjoyed looking at the many displays of work that show the wide variety of things that you are taught. I was particularly impressed with your Key Stage 2 Liturgy. Your singing was wonderful: it was not just the solos and choir but also the joy with which all of you sang your hearts out! I also enjoyed the many tableaux. It was also encouraging to see that all your teachers took part. They care for you exceptionally well and are skilful in helping you to learn. They plan interesting and exciting activities for you, and we can understand why you all love lessons and learning.

Your behaviour is excellent and you have very positive attitudes to each other. We were very impressed how well all of you get on together. You have an excellent understanding of how to stay fit and healthy. Your headteacher and all the other adults involved in leading and managing your school do a good job.

We have asked your school to do two things. Firstly, to make sure that more of you gain the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2. Secondly, although you attain very high standards in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6, this is not the case for science where your standards are similar to those found nationally. We have therefore asked your teachers to speed your progress and to raise standards in science in the junior classes by making sure that you continue to have lots of chances to do more practical and investigative work.

Once again, thank you for your help. We know that the staff will help you to keep doing your best.

Yours sincerely

Keith Sadler

Lead Inspector