

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School, Whitwick

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120214
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	313553
Inspection dates	9–10 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Doris Bell

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 on roll	
School	193
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Louisa Briars
Headteacher	Janice Butlin
Date of previous school inspection	27 October 2003
School address	Parsonwood Hill Whitwick Coalville LE67 5AT
Telephone number	01530 832799
Fax number	01530 832799

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School is a smaller-than-average-sized village primary school where attainment on entry to the Reception class is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar to most schools. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage although a few come from minority ethnic or mixed ethnic backgrounds. Nearly two thirds of pupils are baptised Catholics.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It is well led and managed, so that the headteacher keeps all staff firmly focused on helping pupils to do their best. She has created a successful senior management team that listens to staff, shows initiative and works well together. The checks it makes on teaching and learning are robust and they lead to improvement. As a result, the quality of teaching is good, pupils achieve well and standards are above average. The pupils' good progress starts in the Foundation Stage with the effective provision there.

The school cares deeply for its pupils and promotes their personal development and well-being very effectively. Their spiritual, moral and social awareness is outstanding and their cultural development good. As a result, pupils leave the school as confident, self-disciplined, well-rounded youngsters who respect others and whose behaviour is exemplary. Several parents commented that they are 'very happy with the school', praising, for example, its 'family feel' and its 'caring attitude towards pupils and their parents'. Pupils' learning and personal development also benefit from a well-planned curriculum that makes good links between subjects. However, while the curriculum promotes literacy and numeracy well, it does not give the same attention to information and communication technology (ICT). Whilst provision for ICT is satisfactory, computers are not used as well as they could to aid learning in other subjects.

The school's good use of assessment information ensures that, in English and mathematics, work is challenging enough to meet the needs of pupils of all capabilities. All pupils have targets for literacy and most have clear guidance on how to improve their work in mathematics. However, pupils are not always sufficiently involved in setting their targets or in reviewing their progress. This limits the contribution they can make to improving their own learning.

The school's own evaluation of its work is thorough and it has a good knowledge of its strengths and areas for development. Its evaluation of its effectiveness was somewhat modest because it considered only the published data rather than the wider, more accurate picture it has about pupils' individual progress and the factors affecting it. The recent improvements in literacy and numeracy and the school's measured approach to ensuring that any improvement is sustainable, give it good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good teaching ensures children make good progress and reach the standards expected nationally for the end of Reception. The strong emphasis placed on developing each child is accompanied by good assessments of their learning. This leads to exciting, well-planned activities, with a good balance between those led by staff and those selected and undertaken by the children. One group, for example, worked independently, learning how to buy and sell the many different kinds of bread found in the 'baker's shop', while at the same time, staff were working with other groups of children on reading and number. The busy, productive learning environment thus created, is a result of the effective teamwork amongst skilled, knowledgeable and well-led staff.

Good communication with parents and good links with the main pre-school provider, ensure that the children settle quickly into school life. They successfully learn to work together and they have a good understanding of how to be safe and healthy. However, their early writing skills are not as well developed as other aspects of their learning. A really good start has been

made on using the relatively new outdoor area as an additional classroom. The school recognises that more remains to be done to extend the use of this area and to help pupils make the transition from Reception to Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Involve pupils in setting their own targets to give them a greater understanding of how to improve their learning by themselves.
- Improve pupils' use of ICT to support their learning in all subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The school's successful drive to raise standards in mathematics and writing has resulted in pupils achieving well. Standards are above average overall in Year 6, having risen in the past two years. Test results rose markedly to well above average in Year 2 in 2007 following a period of decline. Initiatives set up by the school to improve mathematics are successfully enabling the most able Year 6 pupils to forge ahead in their learning. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans.

The recently introduced 'Big Writing' approach and the strong focus on writing in different subjects are successfully improving the quality of writing throughout the school. Pupils now write well, with a good understanding of the need to use different styles for different purposes and audiences. However, while they make satisfactory progress in developing their ICT skills, they do not apply these skills sufficiently well to support their learning in other subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school. They act responsibly, showing real consideration and respect for others. Their behaviour is exemplary. They have high standards of self-discipline, a good sense of right and wrong and a good understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe. Certain of their own place in the world, they become confident, well-rounded youngsters who reach out to others and work well with them. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social awareness is excellent, and their cultural development good. They have a good understanding of how people's lives are affected by the religious faith they choose to follow but they are less well informed about the range of cultures that exist around them. They speak proudly of their school and their teachers who, they say, 'like us to enjoy our lessons and make them fun'.

Pupils make healthy living choices. This is exemplified in their request that the tuck shop be replaced, and in their good participation in the many sporting activities available to them. They relish responsibility and make a good contribution to the community, for example as school councillors, stationery shop managers and fund-raisers. All of this, along with their good progress in literacy and numeracy and their sound progress in ICT, prepares them well for their future. However, their attendance is only satisfactory because of holidays taken in term time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good planning, based on the accurate assessment of each pupil's learning and personal development, ensures that all pupils make good progress. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and work rate. They brief their teaching assistants well and use them effectively to support different groups, from the least to the most able.

The 'marking ladders' used in writing, and the good marking seen in pupils' 'Big Writing' books, are beginning to address this. Written marking is less consistent in other subjects, but teachers always discuss pupils' work with them and give them good opportunities to learn from each other. Teachers make good links between different subjects and pupils are beginning to make these connections themselves. For example, during a history-related literacy session, they quickly recognised how a Shakespearean play they had studied included fact and fiction about Tudor times.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum promotes pupils' learning and personal development well. It is successfully enriched by a good range of visits, visitors and well-attended extra-curricular clubs and activities. The strong links between most subjects ensure that good emphasis is placed on promoting literacy and numeracy without losing breadth and balance in other subjects. The exception is ICT. While provision is satisfactory, ICT is not used well enough to promote learning in other subjects. Having improved ICT resources and introduced some specialist teaching, the school is about to start work on doing this.

The unique approach to keeping all writing in one book successfully ensures that pupils apply their literacy skills whatever the purpose of their writing. Numeracy skills, too, are promoted well in different subjects. For example, pupils were quick to point out that the data handling in their writing books was there because they were writing a report following their analysis and interpretation of the data.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The very strong emphasis the school places on nurturing pupils contributes greatly to their good achievement. This, and the school's good links with external agencies and other schools, ensures that all pupils are supported really well, including when they transfer to high school. Excellent relationships and the warm, friendly family ethos contribute greatly to the pupils' good personal development, safety and well-being. Parents praise highly the way the school teaches pupils to be 'part of a team'. Parents are encouraged to engage actively in their children's education and in the life of the school. The procedures for safeguarding pupils, including those for child protection, are robust.

Academic guidance is good. Pupils know their literacy targets and, although they do not have targets for mathematics, most also know the steps they need to take to improve their learning in that subject. However, they are not yet fully enough involved in setting their targets or in

reflecting on how well they are progressing towards them. This is improving with the use of marking ladders in literacy.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is passionate about the school. She has the same vision for the staff as for the pupils, namely, that each one is enabled to do their best at all times. She supports and guides staff well, ensuring that, in the words of one parent and echoed by several others, 'children are stretched academically as well as personally'. Governors, senior managers and other staff, all of whom have the pupils' best interests at heart, share the headteacher's vision and fulfil their roles effectively. Governors visit school regularly. They check what is happening in the subjects or aspects for which they have responsibility and report to the full governing body. Thus, all governors are well informed about how well the school is doing. Staff are highly committed to the pupils and consistently encourage them to do well. They respond well to the headteacher's encouragement 'not to moan but to find a solution'.

The school sets itself challenging targets based on careful consideration of how well pupils are doing and how they might be encouraged to achieve just that little bit more. However, much remains to be done to help pupils benefit fully from their developing ICT skills, and leaders and managers have not yet ensured that pupils are fully involved in all aspects of assessment.

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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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	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 disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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 the 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?	2

¹ Grade 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.

Annex A

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 tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

11 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Holy Cross Catholic Primary School, Whitwick, LE67 5AT

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school earlier this week. You clearly enjoy being at school. You told us that your teachers like you to enjoy your lessons and that they make them fun. You are right in this and in thinking that you go to a good school. Here are some of the other good things we found.

- You make good progress because you are taught well and you can see how what you learn in one subject can help you to make faster progress in another.
- All of the staff care deeply for you and want you to do your best at all times. They help you to become mature, confident young people by the time you leave the school.
- Your behaviour is excellent. You greatly respect adults and each other and know how to keep yourselves and others safe, fit and healthy. You demonstrated this really well when you changed the tuck shop into a stationery shop to avoid eating unhealthy snacks.
- The headteacher and governors have your interests at heart and they lead and manage the school well. The staff support them well in this.

We found there are two things the school could do to help you make even better progress than you do now. They are:

- Help you learn how you can set your own targets so that you gain an even greater understanding of how you can improve your own learning.
- Give you the chance to use your information and communication technology (ICT) skills to take your learning further in all subjects.

You can help in all of this by continuing to work hard and listening to your teachers. We are sure that you will continue to enjoy learning as much as you do now.

Yours faithfully

Doris Bell Lead inspector

11 October 2007



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Doris Bell
Lead inspector