

Holy Rood Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	127416
Local Authority	HERTFORDSHIRE LA
Inspection number	315592
Inspection dates	4–5 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Paul Cosway

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	483
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jackie Elliott
Headteacher	Ms Evelyn Ward
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Greenbank Road Watford WD17 4FS
Telephone number	01923 481340
Fax number	01923 481342

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Holy Rood Catholic Primary School is larger than average. It was formed in 2006, the result of an amalgamation of the existing infant and junior schools. The school population is largely from a White British background, but there are significant numbers of children of Irish, Italian or Philippino background. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is close to average. The proportion of pupils whose first language is not English is close to the national average and there are three pupils at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with statements of special educational needs, is close to the average nationally. The attainment of most children is average on entry to the school. It has 'Activemark' and Investors in People awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school judges itself to be good, and the inspection confirms this. Some aspects of the school's work are outstanding. The quality of education is rarely less than good in any class and this is the main reason why pupils make such good progress.

The many enthusiastic comments made by parents accurately reflect the school's strengths. They praise the headteacher, whose outstanding leadership, with able support from her management team, has brought about significant improvements. She has developed the systems for school self-review, which are excellent, and has fostered teamwork across the school so that all are working with the same vision and high expectations. Rigorous monitoring of the work of the school by the management team has identified where teaching is less strong and well-planned professional development is raising standards. The school gives good value for money and is outstandingly well placed to improve further.

Pupils achieve well. By the end of Year 6 they reach standards above the average nationally in mathematics and science and well above in English. Progress in English is outstanding and standards of writing are very high. This is because pupils are encouraged to write at length and their work is thoroughly marked to show them how to improve. Personal development is outstanding. Behaviour is often excellent in class, because teachers manage their classes very well and provide pupils with interesting, stimulating activities. Pupils learn to be very safe and responsible and understand how to lead healthy lives. Their preparation for the future is excellent, because they are taught to work together well and develop all the skills they need to continue to learn. The school is a close and caring community, but also reaches out to others. All have equal opportunities to succeed and as a result all achieve well, no matter what their background or abilities.

Teaching is good overall and there is some outstanding practice; some teaching is much more effective than others. Teachers plan lessons thoroughly and ensure that pupils' individual learning needs are met. The curriculum is good, enhanced with a wide range of clubs and educational visits. There are some good examples of links between subjects, but the school is aware of the need to extend these. Care, support and guidance for pupils are outstanding. All statutory safeguarding requirements and procedures are firmly in place. Parents were almost unanimous in their praise for the ways the school encourages and supports their children. Academic support and guidance are excellent. The school has made an excellent start following its recent amalgamation and already fulfils its mission of developing a shared understanding of living out Gospel values. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and is well managed by the temporary leader. It provides children with a good start to their education and ensures that they develop good basic skills. The curriculum is well planned to cover all areas of learning, both indoors and outdoors, with good opportunities to develop imaginative and structured play. There is good emphasis on teaching language, communication, personal and social skills so that children achieve well. Standards by the time they enter Year 1 are at least in line with those expected and often above. Assessment procedures and systems for tracking children's progress are thorough and

accurate. Relationships are excellent and so children settle quickly and happily. Parents are rightly pleased with the provision. The school has good plans to improve the range of resources, to include an outdoor amphitheatre and new classrooms.

What the school should do to improve further

- Share best practice amongst teachers to raise the quality of teaching even further.
- Develop the curriculum further to build links between subjects, so that what is learnt in one is developed and reinforced in others.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

At the end of Year 6, standards are above average and all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, those for whom English is an additional language and the gifted and talented, achieve well. Many of the pupils with special educational needs, mostly specific learning difficulties (dyslexia), attain at least average standards by the end of Year 6. In the Foundation Stage, children enjoy learning and quickly acquire the skills they need. By the end of Year 2, most pupils have a secure mastery of literacy and numeracy skills and attainment is above average. Almost all pupils reach at least the expected level for their age (Level 4) by the end of Year 6 in the national tests in English, mathematics and science. They make especially good progress in English, where their achievement is outstanding. Standards are well above average in English, because of their excellent reading, writing and speaking skills. In an excellent lesson, Year 6 pupils took part in a class debate in which they contributed in a way that would have done credit to pupils in a secondary school. The school exceeded its challenging targets for 2007 and has set appropriately higher targets for 2008.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptional and they develop into friendly, confident and happy young persons, who show a great awareness of the needs of others. They have a very good understanding of the diversity of cultures within British society. One class is developing a link with a school in Africa, enhancing their knowledge of the wider world. They are fully involved in the school community through the school council, and in the wider community.

Pupils behave well in school. They say that bullying is rare and know that there is an adult they can turn to if they are in difficulty. They enjoy their education immensely. Attendance is average, because some families take extended holidays abroad to visit their relatives against the school's advice. Pupils have a very good understanding of the need to stay healthy, through eating well, having a balanced diet, and taking regular exercise.

They are also well aware of the need to keep safe. Pupils are prepared well for the further stages of education through the good development of basic skills and in the very good opportunities, they have to work together in lessons and other activities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress in their learning. This is the result of good teaching, some of which is outstanding. For them learning is lively, exciting and planned with great care to meet their diverse needs. Highly skilled support staff play an equally important role in enabling pupils, particularly those needing extra help, to gain confidence, give of their best and achieve well. Many teachers focus successfully on collaborative working, developing thinking, questioning and problem solving so that most lessons 'buzz' with industry and enjoyment. However, some teaching does not always enthuse the pupils or sets the very high expectations as much as in other classes. Assessment of pupils' work and progress is a strong feature of the teaching, providing the basis for future lesson plans and the learning targets for individual pupils. Teachers expect and successfully encourage pupils to share in evaluating their progress. Consequently, pupils are very clear about what they are good at, what they are less good at, and what they need to do to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides pupils with a range of activities stimulating, relevant and well tailored to meet their different needs. A strong emphasis is given to developing pupils' basic skills, including information and communication technology (ICT). These skills are frequently well used to support pupils' learning in other subjects, but not consistently so yet. The successful introduction of creative/focus weeks, such as the One World Faith Week, provides pupils with the benefits of a more integrated approach to their work and learning. The curriculum is rich in supplementary activities such as visits, visitors, clubs and events. These are often provided in partnership with the local community and very strong partnership with the church. They contribute significantly to pupils' enjoyment of school and to their personal development as active and interested young people.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care shown to pupils is outstanding. Staff have a high level of commitment to their well-being and there is excellent support for all pupils including those with specific learning difficulties and those at an early stage of learning English. External agencies are used particularly well to help pupils needing additional support in their learning. Requirements for safeguarding pupils are met and there is good provision for care before and after school. There are good arrangements to smooth transition into the nursery and on transfer to secondary school. Academic guidance is outstanding. Pupils feel that teachers' very thorough and supportive marking helps them to improve. The school tracks pupils' progress well through regular assessment of their work. Targets are understood well by pupils and are used very effectively to raise standards.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher's leadership is outstanding and this is a major reason why the school has prospered in such a short time. The priority was to forge the staff into an effective team, despite the fact that there were very different management systems and varied expectations of teachers in the two schools. Not only has she and her team achieved this, but they have also raised standards and improved behaviour and attitudes significantly. Many parents were opposed to the merger. Almost all now praise the changes that have been made. A typical comment is: 'My children are very happy here. A happy child will learn and excel, and that is what Holy Rood achieves.' The headteacher's enthusiasm and commitment drives this pursuit of excellence. She is supported very well by her management team. Her belief in the power of middle leadership has proved justified. All managers in the school monitor and lead their areas of responsibility exceptionally well. Working together, there are excellent systems for reviewing and improving the school's work. Governance is outstanding. Governors hold the school to account and it was their sheer determination to improve, excellent clarity of vision and their high level of strategic planning that brought about the amalgamation. As a result of its excellent leadership, the school already gives good value for money and is excellently placed to improve further.

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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	NA
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	1

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?	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
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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	1

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?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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	1
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

6 March 2008

Dear Pupils

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

Thank you very much for making us so welcome at your school. You were all very friendly, polite and helpful and we enjoyed meeting so many of you. It was very interesting seeing you at work in your classrooms. I particularly enjoyed listening to the philosophical debate in Year 6. It was hard to believe that you were only 11 years old as I heard the sensible and thoughtful ways that you discussed issues of right and wrong. We would like to say special thanks to the group of pupils who met with us to tell us what it is like to be a pupil at Holy Rood.

Your school provides you with a good education. You feel safe and cared for because the school looks after you so well. You make good progress and, by the end of Year 6, reach higher standards in literacy and numeracy than pupils in many other schools. You behave well and enjoy your learning because teaching is good and you have interesting lessons.

The teachers in charge of the school are leading and managing it well. Your headteacher is determined that you will get the very best education and all the staff share her enthusiasm and vision.

We have asked the school to make sure that teachers learn from each other so that all teach very well. We also want the school to link subjects together more, so that what you learn in one lesson helps you in another.

Once again thank you for your help. Work hard and make the most of your time in this lovely school.

Yours sincerely

Paul Cosway

Lead inspector