

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105087
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	377176
Inspection dates	4–5 July 2012
Lead inspector	Kevin Johnson

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	217
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Philip McGovern
Headteacher	Jane Bradley
Date of previous school inspection	11 November 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Kevin Johnson
Chris Maloney

Additional Inspector
Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in seven lessons or parts of lessons taught by nine teachers, talked to pupils, and reviewed some of their work. Meetings were held with staff and members of the governing body, as well as some parents and carers. Taken into account were 34 questionnaires returned by parents and carers and those completed by pupils and members of staff. Inspectors also looked at a wide range of documentation which included that relating to safeguarding, the curriculum, the school's self-evaluation, minutes of governing body meetings, national assessment data and the school's own assessments.

Information about the school

This is an average sized primary school in which almost all the pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is slightly below average.

Among the school's recent achievements are the Activemark, the Basic Skills Quality Mark and Healthy School status. A breakfast club is provided during term time.

The school meets the current floor standard which is the government's minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key Findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It is not yet good because although there has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection, there is scope for further improvement in teaching and in the leadership and management of the school. The quality of care provided for pupils is good. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection
- Children enter the Nursery class with knowledge and skills that are generally well below those typically expected for their age. They make good progress in Nursery and Reception classes. When they leave the Early Years Foundation Stage, their attainment is still below average.
- Achievement is satisfactory. From Years 1 to 6, pupils make satisfactory progress. Attainment is showing signs of improvement. At the end of Year 6, attainment is broadly average in English and below average in mathematics. In English, pupils' reading is stronger than their writing.
- Overall, teaching is satisfactory with some that is good and outstanding. Teachers establish good relationships and ensure that pupils learn in a caring and supportive environment. There are inconsistencies, however, in the pace and challenge of some lessons and the effectiveness of teachers' marking.
- Pupils behave well and feel safe in school. They share trusting relationships with adults. Through their politeness and courtesy pupils contribute well to the friendly, caring ethos of the school. They behave well in lessons and their attitudes to learning are good. Attendance is improving, although still below average.
- Leaders are strongly committed in their drive to secure school improvement and share clear vision for the school's future. Satisfactory systems and procedures for the management of teaching and for the school's performance are beginning to show a positive impact. Future planning outlines the school's main

priorities but does not identify specific measureable outcomes for pupils to help leaders' evaluation of the progress made. The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' attainment, particularly in writing and mathematics, and accelerate progress further by building on recent improvements in teaching and learning so that:
 - pupils' work always matches their abilities and levels of understanding
 - marking consistently informs pupils about how to improve their work in all subjects and teachers check whether pupils have acted on any advice given
 - pupils have enough time in lessons to finish tasks and to check targets and evaluate their progress afterwards
 - teachers provide plentiful opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their skills in meaningful contexts across the curriculum
 - attendance and punctuality improves and important learning time is not missed.

- Increase the effectiveness of leaders and managers, including the governing body, by including expected measureable outcomes for pupils in all action planning and evaluating the progress towards them rigorously.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils enjoy lessons especially when there is practical work to do, and they have the opportunity to work with others. They say that they do not enjoy lessons when teachers talk for too long. The large majority of pupils feel that they learn a lot from their lessons. They have positive attitudes to learning and some older pupils already have clear aspirations. For example, one pupil who wants to be a paramedic knows how important science subjects will be at secondary school. Pupils generally work well in lessons but are often not clear about their individual targets and consequently how much progress they are making.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress from their well below expected starting points on entering the Nursery. Good provision for their learning and development, especially their personal and social skills, result in their good behaviour and willingness to learn. Letters and the sounds they make (phonics) are taught well. This gives them the confidence they need when they begin to tackle early reading. By the end of the Reception Year, despite good progress from their starting points, children's skills, especially in writing, are generally below average.

Progress throughout the school is satisfactory. It is variable from class to class, although it is more consistent in reading than in writing and mathematics. Progress was hampered for some pupils due to earlier inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, but is now beginning to pick up more pace. Current school assessments, as well as pupils' work, indicate that most are working within the expected levels for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals achieve satisfactorily. They attain as well as others in their group nationally. The school is successfully closing gaps in attainment for all groups.

Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs learn satisfactorily and their achievement is satisfactory. A wide range of additional support is planned to boost their basic skills and delivered either one-to-one or in groups as needed. Monitoring of progress and provision, however, is too informal and does not focus clearly enough on specific outcomes for individual pupils.

Attainment in reading at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 is average. Pupils in Year 2 have positive attitudes to reading and enjoy stories. They know how to break down the sounds that letters make in order to make sense of unfamiliar words. Pupils in Year 6 read suitably challenging books accurately. They know how to find specific information from books, and what strategies to use to help them understand what they read. However, reading for pleasure is not generally high on their agenda and most tend to read only what the school provides.

Most parents and carers feel that their children's progress is good, but inspection evidence, including the school's assessments indicate satisfactory progress overall.

Quality of teaching

Most parents and carers are very positive about the teaching their children receive. Teachers value the contributions that pupils make to lessons and always make sure that self-esteem is boosted by praising pupils' efforts and using their ideas to help with explanations. Consequently, pupils feel safe, behave well, and are keen to share their views with the class. Resources are used well, particularly interactive whiteboards which help pupils to focus on learning and make explanations much clearer.

Where teaching is most effective there is good pace to pupils' learning because they are suitably challenged. Time is used well and they are continually questioned in order to assess their understanding and move their thinking on. In a mathematics lesson, for example, high expectations, good quality resources and an activity that had a 'real-life' element helped pupils to understand the mathematical probability of things happening from 'certain' to 'impossible'. There was good challenge in a literacy lesson for pupils, who first searched for information about the Paralympic Games on computers then began to write their own fact sheets. The quality of learning was good and pupils developed a good understanding of others' difficulties and the barriers they have to cross in order to achieve. One Year 4 pupil wrote a motto for the paralympians – 'Train hard and try extra hard'. Teachers are beginning to link writing opportunities across different subjects but there is less evidence of this happening in mathematics.

Where teaching is less effective, work is not matched well to pupils' abilities and understanding. This results in work being too hard for some pupils and too easy for some, particularly the more-able pupils. Teachers occasionally talk for too long, which causes pupils' concentration to lapse and leaves too little time to finish activities and to evaluate their learning. Teachers' marking of pupils' work shows recent improvement, particularly in literacy. However, it is inconsistent in quality across subjects in the level of clear guidance it gives and its impact on pupils' next pieces of work.

Teaching ensures disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Parents and carers overwhelmingly agree that their children are safe and well cared for in school. That view is shared by pupils who say that they always feel safe. They are confident that adults are always on hand to help them if needed. Pupils feel safe in the playground. They have a good understanding of different forms of bullying and name-calling. Such incidents are rare and school records show that such incidents have declined. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe outside school. For example, they are alert to the dangers of cyber-bullying and of potentially dangerous places in their locality.

Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Pupils are always polite and friendly and have very caring attitudes towards others. They understand the acceptable boundaries with regard to respect for others and their personal behaviour, and rarely cross them. Pupils contribute well to the everyday life of the school. They have a say in school matters through the school council and are conscientious about their eco-responsibilities. The thriving breakfast club, appreciated by parents and carers, has made some inroads into improving punctuality but still too frequently some pupils do not arrive in time. Attendance fluctuates and, overall, is below average. Nevertheless, there is a recognisable rising trend, as a result of the school's continuing efforts and good relationships with parents and carers.

Leadership and management

Leaders and managers have embraced local authority support effectively and have begun to make important improvements since the previous inspection. Good progress has been made towards securing a more consistently good quality of teaching. Pupils' behaviour has improved and their academic attainment and progress are showing positive signs. While leaders show satisfactory capability to sustain improvements, they acknowledge that action planning is not sufficiently focused on expected measurable outcomes for pupils. There has been a strong focus on the management of teaching and learning. As a result of carefully targeted professional development, for example, in the teaching of phonics and the use of assessment information, as well as a rigorous challenge to underperformance, the quality of teaching is improving.

The governing body is ambitious for the school and works diligently to raise its profile within the community. However, while encouraging and supporting the school's efforts, it does not hold the school to account rigorously enough. Nevertheless, statutory obligations, including the overseeing of safeguarding procedures, meet all requirements.

The school challenges all forms of discrimination strongly and promotes equality of opportunity satisfactorily. There are no significant gaps in the attainment of different groups of pupils and their pastoral care and well-being is carefully monitored. The curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to enjoy first-hand experiences. It contributes positively to developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, enriching music provision for pupils and links with the high school raise pupils' achievement in physical education and promote their personal development and self-esteem well.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



6 July 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Holy Cross Catholic Primary School, Birkenhead, CH41 7DU

Thank you for the very friendly welcome you gave us when we came to inspect your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you about the school. We were impressed by your politeness and good manners and saw that you behaved well in lessons. We also saw how well you care for one another and help to make your school a safe place for everyone. Some of you could improve your attendance, however, and need to try harder to get to school on time. That way you will not miss any important learning.

Holy Cross is a satisfactory school. The standards you reach in English and mathematics are improving and you make satisfactory progress. Your progress in reading is better than it is in writing and mathematics and we would like teachers to provide you with more opportunities to practise and improve these skills. The teachers try to make your lessons enjoyable.

The teachers, the governing body and your parents and carers would like the school to be even better. To help that to happen, we have asked for two things to improve. The first is for more of your lessons to be as good as the very best, by making sure that you are all challenged as well as you should be and that you are always given enough time to finish your work in lessons and then to check on the progress you have made. Also, we have asked the staff to always make it clear exactly what you need to do next when they mark your work and to see that you follow it up. The third thing is for the leaders to check carefully that you are reaching the targets the school sets for you, especially in writing and mathematics.

You can help by making sure you attend school every day and working as hard as you possibly can.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Johnson
Lead Inspector

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