

The Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School

Cotterill, Halton Brook, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 2NL

Inspection dates 4–5 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The school has transformed since the previous inspection and major shortcomings have been eradicated.
- Strong leadership, plus the unwavering commitment of staff, have brought about the school's success. As a result, teaching and pupils' achievement have improved.
- Pupils across the school make good progress.
- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are broadly average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6.
- Children get off to a flying start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are well prepared for Year 1 because their reading, writing and number skills are carefully developed.
- All pupils achieve well and achievement gaps between groups are closing quickly.
- Teaching is consistently good in all classes because teachers know their pupils well and match activities to their needs.
- Teachers are skilled at helping pupils to use their basic skills in other subjects through lively and imaginative activities.
- Pupils enjoy school, feel safe and behave well at work and play. Their positive attitudes to learning and to each other underpin the school's welcoming atmosphere.
- Teachers' performance is well managed and the systems to check on the work of the school are comprehensive and effective.
- Members of the governing body have raised their game. They have secure systems to help them check on the school's performance and prevent it slipping backwards.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- More-able pupils do not always receive enough challenge.
- Not all pupils are given the time to respond to teachers' quality marking.
- The emphasis on reading, writing and mathematics sometimes reduces the focus on key learning skills in other subject areas.
- Too many pupils miss up to a tenth of their schooling.

Information about this inspection

- Her Majesty's Inspector observed teaching and learning in eight lessons taught by six teachers. Two of these lessons were joint observations with the headteacher. The inspector also made shorter visits to classrooms to observe the teaching of reading.
- The inspector observed and spoke to pupils during lessons and at play and lunchtime. She met formally with two groups of pupils.
- Meetings were held with staff, senior leaders and managers, members of the governing body, the headteacher of the partner school, the School Improvement Partner and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including arrangements for safeguarding, information about pupils' attainment and progress and pupils' books.
- A discussion was held with 12 parents. The inspector also spoke informally to a small group of parents at the start of the school day. There were not enough responses on Parent View (the on-line questionnaire) to inform the inspection.

Inspection team

Joanne Olsson, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The number of pupils from minority ethnic groups is lower than found nationally and few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is more than twice the national average. (Pupil premium is additional funding provided by the government for pupils who are known to be eligible for free schools meals, children who are looked after by the local authority or are children of service families.)
- The proportion of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs supported at school action is above average. An above-average proportion of pupils have a statement of educational need or have extra support because they have been identified as school action plus.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum standards and rate of progress expected of primaryaged pupils.
- The school has received the following awards: Active School Award, Silver Artsmark, Gold Sing Up Award and the Marjorie Boxhall Nurture Group Award. It has also achieved Healthy School status.
- There is a pre-school on the school site. This is not managed by the governing body and is subject to a separate inspection. The latest report is available on the Ofsted website.
- When the school was inspected in October 2011, its overall effectiveness was judged to be inadequate and it was deemed to require special measures. This was the fifth monitoring inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' achievement further by:
 - providing more-able pupils with greater challenge in reading, writing and mathematics so that more pupils exceed the levels expected for their age
 - helping pupils to develop their logic and reasoning skills so they can tackle more complex mathematical problems
 - making sure pupils have the time to act on the good quality advice teachers provide through their marking
 - reducing absence rates for those pupils who miss up to a tenth of their education by working with parents to eliminate holidays during term time.
- Enhance the curriculum by:
 - ensuring key skills in other subjects have equal weighting with reading, writing and mathematical skills
 - extending opportunities for pupils to broaden their experiences through a wider range of enrichment activities, including after-school and lunchtime clubs
 - providing pupils with greater opportunities to explore cultural diversity in their local area and the United Kingdom.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils achieve well because weaknesses in reading, writing, speaking and mathematical skills have been tackled with vigour. As a result, pupils across the school are no longer racing to catch up but are working at the levels expected for their age. Almost all pupils make good progress from their starting points. Consequently, pupils are well equipped for the next stage of their education.
- Children start the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge that are typically lower than those expected for their age. They now make good progress from this point. Unvalidated data for Reception, Year 2 and Year 6 show pupils' attainment is rising rapidly to be broadly average. Nonetheless, not enough pupils are exceeding the levels expected for their age. This is because more-able pupils are not always challenged to do their very best.
- Children in Reception get off to a good start because their basic skills are carefully fostered. As a result, young children have the strategies to read and spell different words and many are willing writers who form letters correctly and use simple punctuation to produce sentences.
- Achievement gaps between different groups are narrowing quickly. Girls are making swifter progress so they are catching up to the boys. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers because of the effective support they receive in class and during nurture group sessions. There are no difference between the achievement of pupils with English as an additional language and pupils from minority ethnic groups and other pupils in the school.
- In the past, pupils who are known to be eligible for pupil premium funding have lagged behind their classmates by almost two terms. Additional funding has been used wisely to provide extra adult support in smaller classes. As a result, this pattern is being reversed. This group of pupils are making strong progress over time so their attainment by the end of Year 6 is above their peers and all pupils nationally.
- Pupils' attainment in reading and writing has improved and is broadly average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils are fluent and confident readers. They have the skills and the stamina to write at length for sustained periods of time across different subjects. Pupils use number with much greater confidence. They have lots of opportunity to solve number problems but their skills in tackling logic and reasoning problems are underdeveloped.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has come on in leaps and bounds since the previous inspection. It is consistently good across the school. Positive relationships underpin welcoming classrooms and high quality displays celebrate pupils' achievements and help them to learn on their own.
- Teachers have high expectations and want the very best for the pupils in their care. Time is used wisely and lessons are carefully structured so pupils have plenty of opportunity to talk about their ideas and to practise new skills.
- Some teaching is exceptional. Excellent subject knowledge and effective questioning means all pupils are challenged. In these lessons, teachers are able to stand back because pupils are equipped to direct their own learning.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Adults have made the very best of a limited classroom to ensure children have access to all areas of learning. The outdoor area is no longer a weak link but is used to make up for shortcomings with the indoor space. Adults encourage children to be independent learners but are on hand to ask good quality questions so children's knowledge and skills are extended.
- Although teaching across all subjects is good, it is stronger in reading, mathematics and writing. Teachers are very successful in helping pupils to use their basic skills in all lessons. However,

the emphasis on basic skills sometimes overshadows the key learning points in other subjects. As a result, English and mathematics sometimes become the key focus in all lessons and opportunities to develop skills in subjects such as history or design technology are lost.

- Teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly and provide clear guidance to help pupils improve. Nonetheless, not all teachers give pupils enough time to respond to this helpful advice.
- Pupils are full of praise for their teachers. They think teachers make learning fun. Parents agree that teaching has improved and pupils are making good progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils work hard. They throw themselves into school life with gusto because they have positive attitudes to learning and they are keen to succeed.
- Pupils are friendly and polite and show respect to adults and to each other because they feel part of the Holy Spirit family. As one pupil commented: 'You never get left out; there is always someone there for you.' Pupils behave well in classes and around the school. Adults rarely need to intervene to remind pupils to behave sensibly.
- Pupils say behaviour is typically good on a day-to-day basis and their learning is not usually disrupted. School records confirm behaviour is good and is improving over time. The school's own parental questionnaire shows most parents agree pupils behave well.
- Different groups of pupils say they feel safe in school. They say bullying hardly ever happens, although there is some occasional name-calling. Nonetheless, pupils are confident adults will listen to their concerns and take action to resolve any of their worries. A few parents disagreed that the school deals effectively with bullying. School records show that any reported incidents of bullying are dealt with appropriately.
- Pupils have an increasing understanding of different types of bullying and they know why racist or homophobic name-calling is wrong. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. For example, younger pupils know about 'Stranger Danger' and older pupils talk with confidence about the strategies they use to keep themselves safe from harm when using personal computers at home.
- Although absence rates are decreasing faster than the national picture, attendance remains stubbornly low. The school has been successful in reducing the number of pupils who miss large chunks of their schooling. Nonetheless, too many pupils miss up to one tenth of their learning, mostly due to family holidays taken in term time.

The leadership and management are good

- The secret to the school's success is the unwavering determination of all staff to bring about improvement. As a result, they have acted on advice and embraced change. The headteacher has skilfully harnessed this commitment to get the best out of everyone. She promotes high expectations, sets clear goals for success and holds teachers to account for their performance. Change has been managed sensitively so morale is high and staff are brimming with enthusiasm.
- Strong systems to manage teachers' performance and effective whole-school and individual training have refreshed teachers' skills and placed inadequate teaching firmly in the past. Teaching is observed frequently and teachers benefit from clear feedback to help them improve their practice.
- Leaders and managers know the school well. Clear plans are in place to make it even better. The school's marked improvement since the last inspection demonstrates good capacity to improve.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination well. This is because gaps in pupils' achievement are closing quickly and there are very few incidents of harassment.
- Weekly newsletters, opportunities to attend assemblies and the Parents' Forum provide opportunities for parents to find out about school life and to share their views. Nonetheless, a small number of parents believe communication between school and home could be stronger.

- The curriculum is lively. It meets pupils' needs and promotes a love of learning. Recent improvements mean there are more opportunities for pupils to benefit from visits and visitors to the school. Plans are in place to exploit new partnerships to broaden pupils' experiences further. Parents welcome the wider range of lunchtime and after-school clubs. They are keen for these to continue and be extended in the new academic year.
 - The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well through exciting topics, ample opportunities to work together and assemblies which help pupils to reflect on their own goals. Emerging links with a school overseas is beginning to help pupils gain a better grasp of cultural diversity. However, there are fewer opportunities for pupils to find out about different cultures in their own locality and the United Kingdom.
 - The local authority has provided effective support to the school. The link with a local partner school has been particularly good in helping senior leaders to achieve their goals. External support has become increasingly light-touch as school leaders and managers have taken responsibility for their own improvement.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - has improved over time. Members of the governing body have clear systems to help them keep an eye on the school's performance. Frequent visits to schools to observe learning and to meet with leaders and managers mean they have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This means they are able to hold senior leaders to account.
 - ensures financial resources are well managed. They are involved in spending decisions for the pupil premium funding and they know the difference this extra money is making in narrowing achievement gaps. They have a firm grasp on teachers' performance management and they are involved in ensuring salary rewards are linked to effective performance.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	111321
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	420650

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	104
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barbara Burgess
Headteacher	Christine Smith
Date of previous school inspection	11 October 2011
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