

# The Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	111321
<b>Local Authority</b>	Halton
<b>Inspection number</b>	325348
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 April 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Clare Henderson

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	113
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Barbara Burgess
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Christine Smith
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 March 2006
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Cotterill Halton Brook Runcorn Cheshire WA7 2NL

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 April 2009
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector.

## Description of the school

This school, smaller than average, is situated in an area of high social disadvantage. A higher than average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average. Almost all pupils are White British. None of the few pupils who belong to minority ethnic groups is at an early stage of learning to speak English. The school has Early Years Foundation Stage provision in its Reception class. The school has gained the Healthy Schools Award, Artsmark and Activemark. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have been in acting posts since September 2008 and the Early Years Foundation Stage manager is on long-term sickness leave. There is a privately run childcare provision on site, which did not form a part of this inspection.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with notable strengths in the outstanding pastoral care provided to pupils and their families. The school is very well respected by, and lies at the heart of, the local community it serves. Parents overwhelmingly support this view. Comments typical of them are, 'The school is like a family and treats you as such.' Senior leaders and governors have, with support and guidance from the local authority, carefully steered the school through an unsettled period of staff changes.

Achievement is satisfactory. Children begin the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills below those expected at this age. In the 2008 Key Stage 1 assessments, standards were below average in writing and well below average in reading and mathematics. The school acted quickly to address the underperformance in reading and mathematics and introduced programmes of work to raise standards. These are beginning to work and these pupils, now in Year 3, are currently making satisfactory progress. The proportion of pupils attaining Level 4 in the 2008 Key Stage 2 tests in mathematics and science was below the national average while English results were close to the national average. Pupils, particularly girls and the more able, make slower progress in mathematics and science than in English. This is because progress checks and the tasks teachers set to extend pupils' learning are less rigorous in these two subjects. Pupils' progress in English is good because they have many opportunities to practise their speaking, listening and writing skills.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding as reflected in their exemplary behaviour. They have an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles and say they feel very safe in school and learn about the dangers of alcohol, fire and drugs. Excellent partnerships with the diocese, the school's family support worker and outside agencies provide timely support for individual pupils. Staff are committed to ensuring pupils' safety and well-being and current safeguarding requirements are met and regularly reviewed.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There are examples of some good teaching, as reflected in pupils' good progress in English. However, in mathematics and science teachers make insufficient use of the information gained through tracking pupils' progress. As a result, tasks are not always suitably matched to pupils' different abilities and learning is satisfactory. The academic guidance for pupils is satisfactory although the overall quality of care, guidance and support is good. The curriculum is satisfactory overall. It pays close attention through its excellent personal and health education programme to ensuring that pupils know the importance of leading a healthy and safe lifestyle. It is also effective in addressing the complex personal needs of a number of pupils and equipping all with skills such as confidence and self-belief. This helps to prepare them for their future lives although the level of their basic skills in mathematics and science is a limiting factor. The curriculum is suitably extended through good use of information and communication technology (ICT) and by a range of enrichment activities, including residential visits and after-school activities.

Leadership and management are satisfactory with strengths developing in the emerging skills of the acting headteacher and senior management team, in the accuracy of the school's self-evaluation and in the role of governors. With staffing changes, most subject leaders are new to their roles and have not received enough training to carry out their responsibilities. The school is well aware of its strengths. It has accurately identified areas to develop and has put

in place plans to address them. Given this, the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve and provides satisfactory value for money.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 3**

The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Children begin school with skills below the level expected, particularly in their reading, writing and calculating skills. The teacher, recently appointed to cover the role of manager, has, with support from the local authority, worked very effectively to improve provision. As a result, the learning environment is stimulating and an increased range of activities is available indoors and out. There is an appropriate balance between activities that adults lead and those that children choose for themselves. These are carefully planned to include all six areas of learning, although there are some missed opportunities, especially outdoors, to extend children's knowledge and understanding of the world and their creative development. Children are very well looked after and all welfare requirements are met. They make satisfactory progress so that, by the time they enter Year 1, most children are working towards the expected goals in most areas of learning. A strength is the children's personal development and well-being, which is outstanding. This is because of the high focus adults give to this area of development. Adult observations are increasingly well used to plan the next steps in children's learning. Leadership in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. There are good links with parents who are kept informed through the year about their children's progress.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Track pupils' progress more rigorously in mathematics and science to raise standards and achievement, particularly those of girls and the more able pupils.
- Make sure that all teachers make sufficient use of the tracking information to plan tasks in mathematics and science that match pupils' different abilities.
- Develop the role of subject leaders to equip them with the necessary skills to monitor, evaluate and support pupils' progress.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Initiatives such as a mathematics recovery programme and more opportunities for pupils to undertake practical mathematics activities, together with a greater emphasis on developing their reading skills are beginning to pay off. Consequently, pupils currently in Key Stage 1 are making satisfactory progress. Similarly, all pupils in Key Stage 2, including the more vulnerable, are making satisfactory progress and most pupils are on track to reach their targets. Achievement in English is good with pupils attaining the national average in the Key Stage tests in 2008. However, despite some acceleration of progress in the current Years 5 and 6, standards in mathematics and science are below expected levels and particularly so for girls and the more able pupils. Good progress in English is attributable to the strong focus paid to developing pupils' speaking, listening and writing skills. Teaching assistants provide appropriate support to enable pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make satisfactory progress alongside their classmates.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is exemplary and enhanced through the extremely caring atmosphere that pervades the school. Pupils' knowledge of other cultures is good. They say they really enjoy coming to school and this is evidenced by their happy demeanour and excellent behaviour. They enjoy the many opportunities to take responsibility, for example as peer mentors, through their involvement in the liturgy, or as school council representatives. They take their responsibility for supporting those less fortunate than themselves very seriously and raise funds for a great number of charities. Pupils are very proud of their responsibilities and are extremely pleased that their efforts are recognised through regular praise and celebration. Attendance is broadly average and improving due to the school's effective strategies. Pupils are articulate, considerate and confident, and have very well-developed social and communication skills. These attributes, together with the good progress pupils make in English and ICT, accompanied by good transition arrangements in Year 6, equip them well for the next steps in their education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Strong relationships between staff and pupils, and pupils' very good behaviour, characterise lessons and this helps to ensure that pupils are willing and ready to learn. Clear planning and a lively pace typify the minority of lessons that are good. In such lessons work is well matched to individual pupils' needs. Good use of support from teaching assistants and the effective use of interactive whiteboards sustain pupils' interest and involvement and ensure that no time is wasted. However, where teaching is no better than satisfactory, the planned tasks set in lessons, particularly for mathematics and science, do not take full account of pupils' different abilities. They insufficiently challenge pupils, in particular girls and the more able, to achieve higher standards. Assessments and tracking information about pupils' progress are not used rigorously enough to improve pupils' progress, particularly girls and the more able, in mathematics and science.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum, which is satisfactory overall, has good features. The successful use of themes within the Creative Partnership venture, for instance Runcorn Roots', extends pupils' speaking and listening skills and promotes their self-confidence. This significantly contributes to their good quality extended writing. Features such as the 'talking tins,' where pupils take home and record family views of Runcorn, strengthen home-school partnerships and add effectively to the value the school places on pupils' and adults' contributions. With a firm foundation in English and ICT, the curriculum has been developed to enable pupils to express themselves through art and music. However, the curriculum is less successful in ensuring that girls and the more able pupils attain their full potential in mathematics and science. Sporting and creative extra-curricular activities are a strong feature of the school's provision, adding to pupils' enjoyment of the curriculum.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 2

'The school always puts the child and parents first,' sums up parents' views of the good-quality care their children receive in this happy school. Pupils are very well looked after and pastoral support is outstanding. Particular strengths are the use of the pastoral family support worker and the nurture room, and close links with the church ensure that the personal needs of all pupils are met, especially those who are more vulnerable. The school has been successful in improving pupils' attendance and punctuality over the last two years. It continues in its efforts to improve the attendance of pupils from a small number of families who do not respond. Pupils receive satisfactory academic guidance through individual target setting. The school has recently updated its marking policy. The school is now working to ensure that this is consistently applied so all pupils fully understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

Senior leaders and governors are working systematically to improve the regularity and accuracy of assessment, target setting and checks on the quality of teaching, pupils' achievement and overall standards. Subject leaders have been given significant roles and are increasingly to be involved in checking the impact of strategies introduced to improve the school's performance. They value their roles but, as yet, have had few opportunities to develop their new skills and competencies. The current, acting, senior leadership team has ensured that self-evaluation is both accurate and inclusive. As a result, staff and governors have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement, and satisfactory progress since the last inspection is secured. Governors are highly supportive of the school and provide satisfactory challenge to school improvement. The school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion, but is aware that currently pupils have few opportunities to enhance their understanding of the different ways in which they are part of different communities within Britain and the world as a whole. Senior leaders satisfactorily promote equality of opportunity, they enable pupils to celebrate diversity and do all they can to eliminate discrimination.



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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?	3
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
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?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	3
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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**

Inspection of The Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School, Runcorn, WA7 2NL

I would like to thank you very much for your help when I inspected your school. I enjoyed my visit very much and thoroughly enjoyed meeting you. Now I would like to share with you what the inspection found out about your school. Yours is a satisfactory school with some areas of school life which are outstanding.

For instance, all the adults in school take excellent care of you and you are very happy with all that they do to make yours a very safe and caring school. Your parents agree and are very happy with all school does to help you in your learning. Your behaviour is excellent and it is clear that you really enjoy school. I was impressed with how well you are doing in writing and how much you enjoy the 'Big write' lessons. Staff work well to make your learning exciting and interesting, for instance, in your involvement in the Creative Partnership project of Runcorn Roots'.

To make the school even better I have asked your teachers to:

- help you all, but especially girls and those who find learning easier than most, to do better in mathematics and science
- make sure that the work set in lessons is just at the right level for you, particularly in mathematics and science
- make sure that those teachers who take responsibility for different subjects become more involved in checking how well you are doing to help you achieve more.

Thank you for helping me so much with the inspection of your school. I hope that you will carry on working hard and help the teachers so that The Holy Spirit school can become even better.