



## **INSPECTION REPORT**

### **Holy Family Primary School Swindon**

Marlowe Avenue, Park North, Swindon SN3 2PT

Telephone: 01793 521933

e-mail address: head@holyfamily.swindon.sch.uk

D/ES Number: 8663001

Headteacher: Mrs Mary Barnard  
Chair of Governors: Mr Terry Ward

---

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Diocese of Clifton  
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

---

Date of inspection: 16-17<sup>th</sup> July 2007  
Date of previous inspection: 8-9<sup>th</sup> October 2002

Reporting Inspector: Mr Joseph Skivington

## **Description of School**

Holy Family is a medium size primary school with 253 pupils on roll. Around 90% of pupils are baptised Catholics. The school is located in a mixed socio-economic area with a significant number of families facing many challenges. The percentage of pupils with English as an additional language is high at 22%, and the number requiring special educational provision is above the average at 19%. Pupils enter the school with below nationally expected levels of knowledge and skills. The school was put into special measures in January 2004 and taken out in April 2005. Ofsted recently (July 2007) judged the school to be good. There are strong links with the parish.

## **Key for inspection grades**

Grade 1: Outstanding;    Grade 2: Good;    Grade 3: Satisfactory;    Grade 4: Unsatisfactory

## **Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school**

Holy Family is a good school with outstanding features. The excellent leadership of the head teacher, together with the wholehearted and vital support of the governors, parents and parish has transformed, in a relatively short time, a failing school into a school which is rapidly on its way to excellence. There is a strong Catholic ethos and an open-ness, which includes everyone regardless of background. The provision for collective worship and the spiritual and moral development of the pupils' is excellent, and very well supported by parents who come in increasing numbers to the assemblies and Masses. The quality of religious education is good. Standards of attainment are in line with national expectations. Achievement is good. Teaching and learning are good, and the curriculum meets the learning needs of all pupils well. Leadership and management of the subject overall is good.

**Grade 2**

## **Improvement since the last inspection**

Since the last inspection improvement has been good, because the school has effectively addressed the issues raised at that time, particularly sharpening assessment procedures, closer monitoring of religious education as a subject, and the introduction of a successful programme dealing with relationships and sex education. Shortly after the last inspection the school entered a very turbulent period, which saw standards and morale drop significantly, but since then there has been dramatic improvement, particularly in behaviour and standards of achievement.

**Grade 2**

## **The capacity of the school community to improve and develop**

The school has a very good capacity to improve, given the excellent leadership, vision and strategies of the senior leadership team. Priorities have been clearly identified and incorporated into the development plan with precise and achievable objectives, within specific time scales.

**Grade 2**

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

- To tie level descriptors more closely to assessment so that pupils have a clear idea of how much they have achieved, and what standard they must set their sights on next
- To bring the standard of marking across all years up to the best, so that it really shows pupils how to improve, as well as informing teaching and learning

## **The Catholic Life of the School**

### **Leadership and Management**

The quality of the leadership of the head teacher and governors in developing the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. They set the highest standards and give clear direction in improving the provision for high quality care and education. The mission statement is central to their thinking, so that all planning and self evaluation is measured against its effectiveness in the life of the whole school community. The monitoring of the specifically Catholic features of the school is excellent, because the mission of the school is often revisited and reflected on, and the response of the parents and pupils warmly invited and made part of the evaluation process. The enthusiastic participation of all pupils, Catholic and non-Catholic, in the Mass and assemblies is a strong feature of the prayer life of the school. All staff are fully committed to its Gospel values, and their witness and role modelling is tremendously effective in the promotion of the spiritual and moral development of the pupils. The governing body has given remarkable, unflagging support to the head teacher in her commitment to restoring the reputation of Holy Family as a centre for excellence and high achievement.

**Grade 1**

### **Collective Worship**

The school's provision for prayer and collective worship is outstanding. Opportunities for formal and informal prayer are part of the school day. The pupils show great reverence and attention to their prayers, making the Sign of the Cross carefully, and even the youngest are well aware of special times and places. They all participate readily, regardless of ability. For example, in an assembly the Good Samaritan was acted out well, and pupils provided their own thoughtful prayers, which made the message relevant to their own lives. Readings were well prepared and read, and the enthusiastic singing led by Year 6 was a joy to hear. There are strong links with parents and parish, with a growing number of parents attending the school Masses. The parish directs the Sacramental preparation programme with the close support of the school. Colourful artwork including the pupils' own prayers and reflections around the school affirms their work, and documents the journey they make through the Church's liturgical year. Their solid spiritual and moral development flows to a large extent from the occasions of collective worship, from the stories about the life of Jesus, from the morals of the parables, as well as the exhortations and challenge to respect life and care for others reiterated in lessons and assemblies. The result has been vastly improved behaviour around the school, and the care they show towards one another. This is striking in the mature and responsible attitude of the Year 6 pupils in watching out for the younger children, as well as the many opportunities to help others in a practical way through fundraising activities for charity.

**Grade 1**

---

---

## **Religious Education**

### **Achievement and Standards in Religious Education**

#### **Grade 2**

The level of religious knowledge and experience of pupils joining the school is below what one would expect nationally. By the end of Year 6 standards of attainment are in line with national expectations. This represents good progress and achievement at each stage. Pupils with special educational needs, and those for whom English is an additional language, achieve as well as the others because of extra support in lessons as well as material which is tailored to their learning needs. Standards are not better in the present Year 6 because the pupils' progress was significantly disrupted during their early years at the school. Nevertheless, much lost ground has been made up and standards across all years are rising rapidly. In reception class and Year 1 pupils quickly learn basic concepts and keywords so that they are able to express themselves simply, or write their own short prayers. They understand some symbols and the idea of special times for prayer, and are able, for instance, to offer their own suggestions for Lenten promises. In Year 2 there are many examples of parables re-told well and understood and empathetic writing on the events of Pentecost. More challenging work as includes interpreting what 'living in the Light' might mean for them. Work on other religions, such as Sikhism, was very well done. By the end of Year 2, most are coming close to the national standard of attainment.

In Year 3 and Year 4 more able pupils can write thoughtfully on what it is to be a good Christian, and contrast the prayers of Hannah and Mary. The symbolism of Baptism is well understood, with some thoughtful writing on the family of God and the importance of promises and commitment. Less able pupils occasionally struggle because they are not challenged appropriately, or because they have misunderstood instructions on what they have to do. Their written work is brief but nevertheless expresses their own response to what they are learning. In Year 5 and Year 6 there are good examples of empathetic writing, such as the Last Supper from John's point of view, or explorations of freedom and responsibility. They can relate forgiveness to their own lives. Their Bible referencing skills are confident. In conversation, pupils showed a good grasp of the main tenets of the Faith, such as the divinity of Jesus, the significance of Easter, or the types and efficacy of prayer. Pupils say they enjoy their lessons, and older pupils were eager to explain how much the school has improved since the arrival of the present head teacher, as well as being well aware that they had missed out on basics in literacy, as well as religious knowledge. Pupils invariably behave and work well, showing a caring and tolerant attitude towards other pupils in, for example, paired and group work.

## **Teaching and learning in Religious Education**

### **Grade 2**

Teaching and learning are both good, with some outstanding aspects of teaching observed during the inspection. Lessons on Special Places were well prepared, with good pace and challenge. Outstanding teaching was characterised by a large element of enthusiasm and fun, coupled with high expectation, so that pupils were completely engrossed and enjoyed having to work out answers for themselves. Skilled questioning included even the quietest child, and teachers allowed ample time for each child to express their ideas and 'get out' what they wanted to say. In a Year 1 lesson pupils were eager to be involved, discussing well in pairs, incidentally showing good listening skills. They were happy to say their own prayers spontaneously in front of their class, and could reflect quietly and in stillness. Teacher assistants provide invaluable support for less able pupils, with the appropriate mix of challenge and intervention, and enabling the class to be split into smaller, different ability groups. Teachers rehearse key words and concepts frequently, so that pupils become confident in understanding and using them as a matter of course. The difficulty a significant number of pupils have in expressing themselves at any length in writing is a barrier to their learning. Written work is not marked consistently across all years nor is it always helpful in showing the pupils how they can improve. Teachers comments are more often congratulatory, rather than challenging pupils to think more carefully and write more at length. While assessment is becoming more effective it is not so closely aligned to the level descriptors that both teacher and pupil know exactly how far they have come and what target they are to aim for next. Behaviour and attitudes in lessons were excellent.

## **Quality of the Curriculum**

### **Grade 2**

The curriculum is well balanced and meets the needs of all the pupils, both in terms of following the diocesan guidelines, and in developing the aspects of Every Child Matters, active citizenship and social inclusion. The curriculum is enriched through weekly Masses, visits to the parish church, and a full rota of assemblies, Lenten prayer services and retreats. There are many opportunities for pupils to exercise their spirit of generosity through outreach to the local community and charities, as well as multi cultural links and the study of other faiths, such as Sikhism and Judaism. The school helps families which are not fully functional, and is true to its mission in giving pupils the experience of treating others, whoever they are, well. The family life

and sex education programme 'In the Beginning' is popular and proving a great success with all years. The curriculum makes a vital contribution to the spiritual and moral development of every child, and promotes both inclusion and social cohesion very effectively.

## **Leadership and management of Religious Education**

### **Grade 2**

The leadership of religious education is excellent. Staff are well supported through training, lesson observations, clear vision and direction. The subject is managed well. A considerable amount of money has been spent on much needed resources, such as Bibles and information technology, which are used to good effect. The self-evaluation of the subject is comprehensive and uses the mission statement clearly as the yardstick to measure its effectiveness. The action plan has correctly identified priorities for improvement, such as the embedding of the new level descriptors, which will enhance the effectiveness of assessment for learning, and an understanding of spirituality within all aspects of the school's life. Areas where teaching is less than good are being systematically addressed, so that the quality of all teaching matches the best. Effective planning to develop ways of assessing and recording of pupils' progress is under way. The securing of consistent, challenging marking of pupils' written work, which really shows them how to improve, is a work still in progress.

The governors discharge their responsibilities towards religious education well, with all statutory requirements being met. They are closely involved in monitoring the content and impact of the subject, and provide valuable support and expertise.