

# Holy Cross Catholic Primary Academy

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	136967
<b>Local authority</b>	N/A
<b>Inspection number</b>	385557
<b>Inspection dates</b>	17–18 January 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Michael Sheridan HMI

This inspection of the academy was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of academy</b>	Academy
<b>Academy category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the academy roll</b>	208
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Nigel Long
<b>Headteacher</b>	Susan McGuiggan
<b>Date of previous academy inspection</b>	23 September 2008
<b>Academy address</b>	Tracyes Road Southern Way Harlow CM18 6JJ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01279 424452
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## Introduction

Inspection team

Michael Sheridan

Her Majesty's Inspector

Penny Spencer

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed nine teachers during 11 lesson observations. In addition to this, inspectors spent short periods of time in classes, looking at particular aspects of the school's work. Every class was observed and the content of several lessons was discussed with pupils and teachers. Inspectors observed children reading in class and listened to six children from Years 1 and 2 read. They carried out joint lesson observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher and assessed the quality of work in books over time with subject leaders. Further meetings were held with members of the governing body and senior and middle leaders. Inspectors looked at the effectiveness of the academy's strategies for inclusion of potentially vulnerable pupils through two case studies. They observed the academy's work, and looked at improvement planning, teachers' planning, tracking data and records of curriculum experiences. Inspectors considered the views of pupils, staff and 68 parents and carers through their responses in questionnaires. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection.

## Information about the academy

This average sized Catholic primary school became an academy in 2011. The academy primarily serves the parishes of St Luke and Holy Cross and the Church of Assumption in Harlow. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups has increased since the last inspection and is now above average. The largest ethnic group is White British, followed by Black or Black British African. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language has also increased and is now above the national average. The number of pupils joining the academy with little or no English is also increasing. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The academy meets the current government floor standards. The academy houses a privately run pre-school and this provision is subject to separate inspection arrangements.

**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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key findings

- This is a good school where pupils are served well by a rich and exciting curriculum.
- Pupils make good progress from their starting points and achieve well, particularly in English.
- Pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength with pupils developing into well rounded young people, appropriately prepared for the next steps in their education.
- Teaching is good overall, although there is some variability, particularly in the teaching of mathematics.
- In some classes, there are limited opportunities for pupils to talk about mathematical concepts. As a result, they do not get to explore the issues they are learning about in the same depth as do pupils in classes where these opportunities are commonplace.
- Pupils who arrive at the academy at an early stage of learning English are supported well and quickly acquire English, so they can access the curriculum fully.
- A very small number of parents and carers stated that the most-able pupils were not always given challenging work. Inspection evidence confirmed that this is the case in some classes, particularly in relation to missed opportunities through marking and feedback to help these pupils improve their work.
- Behaviour is good overall and pupils say that it has improved so the academy is calm and orderly.
- Pupils often demonstrate maturity and responsibility beyond their years. Older pupils excel in their roles as play leaders, peer mediators and monitors.
- The headteacher provides strong leadership with a clear vision of excellence.
- Established middle leaders effectively monitor the quality of work in their areas and action plans are accurate in identifying appropriate areas for development.
- Staff have confidence in leaders. Adults within the academy are united in their commitment to continuing improvement.

## What does the academy need to do to improve further?

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- Ensure marking and feedback always provide useful guidance so all pupils, including the most able, can make further improvements to their work through consistent opportunities for pupils to respond to this guidance.
- Ensure that pupils in all classes have regular opportunities to talk about mathematical concepts and explain their mathematical thinking so they secure a solid understanding of number and calculation.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

While there are significant differences in the starting points of different cohorts and individuals, pupils typically arrive at the academy with skills broadly in line with those expected for their age. Pupils make good progress as they move through the academy so that attainment at the end of Year 6 is typically above average. While there are some differences in the attainment of boys and girls in some year groups, overall, boys, girls and pupils from different ethnic groups achieve equally well.

Pupils get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and, as a result, enter Year 1 well equipped to access Key Stage 1 and develop their basic skills. Pupils make good progress in reading so, by the time they are six, most can read sufficiently well to work out unfamiliar words and understand simple texts. Effective identification, support and intervention ensure that pupils who cannot read at the expected level in Year 1 have good opportunities to catch up. Standards of attainment at the end of Year 6 are above average in reading and other areas so pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Pupils who arrive at the academy with little or no English quickly settle and learn English successfully as a result of the bespoke support given to them and their teachers. One pupil, who speaks English as an additional language, commented warmly about how the academy welcomed him and supported him in developing his English so that he could access the curriculum effectively. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are making similar progress to other pupils in their classes.

Achievement is strongest in English. In mathematics pupils make good progress over time but this is less consistently well taught and, as a consequence, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge. Pupils' personal development is strong. They have good attitudes to learning and they contribute effectively to the positive atmosphere in academy. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress in line with their peers. This is a result of highly effective, individually tailored, support in class and careful monitoring of progress.

### Quality of teaching

Good teaching, supported by the strong and exciting curriculum, is at the forefront of this academy's success. Careful planning, that takes into account the needs of

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different groups of pupils, ensures that they all make good progress. All parents and carers who responded to the relevant questions in the inspection questionnaire agreed that the academy helps their children to develop skills in communication, reading, writing and mathematics and that their children are taught well.

Pupils enjoy their lessons and understand the importance of working hard. In one mathematics lesson observed, pupils giggled with delight at the prospect of using money to purchase items in a shop and work out their own change. Because this activity was well planned to take into account the range of abilities, pupils all made good progress in understanding the principles of adding and subtracting decimals. While much of the teaching of mathematics is inspiring, some relies too much on teachers presenting calculation methods to pupils. In these lessons, opportunities to embed learning are missed because pupils are asked for their answers but not given the opportunity to discuss or explain their thinking.

The feedback given to pupils by teachers varies in terms of how effective it is in helping pupils improve their work. Where feedback is strongest, teachers use a variety of methods to discuss pupils' work with them and provide them with opportunities to think about, and make, improvements. In one lesson observed, a teacher used a camera connected to a projector (visualiser) to present a recently completed piece of work on the interactive whiteboard. Through effective questioning, the teacher was able to support pupils in identifying in this piece of work where the writing was successful and where improvements could be made. As a result, pupils were able to make effective improvements to their own work. Where guidance is less strong, teachers make general comments about pupils' work but these are not specific enough to help pupils make the rapid improvements seen in some classes. This is particularly evident for more-able pupils where marking, in some classes, tends to be complimentary but does not provide consistent guidance for them to make more impressive gains.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils' behaviour around the academy and in lessons is good. Pupils feel safe and say that they know they can go to an adult if they feel unsafe. Pupils speak very highly of the learning mentor in this respect. They take a real pride in their academy and contribute well to the positive ethos that exists. Older pupils make a significant contribution to the academy's success and act as good role models for younger pupils through their well-developed roles as play leaders, peer mentors, buddies and monitors. Dinner time is calm and pleasant, with pupils sensibly serving each other 'family style' at their table. Almost all parents and carers stated that the academy dealt effectively with inappropriate behaviour, and inspectors found that the academy's strategies are effective and robust. Incidences of inappropriate behaviour are infrequent and dealt with quickly. Racist incidents are rare. The academy monitors these very carefully to ensure that no patterns exist. Almost all parents and carers judge that behaviour is good, although a small number stated that their children's lessons were sometimes disrupted by bad behaviour. Inspectors saw no examples of bad behaviour in classes but did see a very small proportion of pupils

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lose concentration when teachers talked for too long. A range of pupils commented that behaviour had improved at the academy, and poor behaviour was rare and dealt with quickly. The academy's behaviour logs support this. Many pupils talked exceptionally positively about the ethos in academy, stating that the academy is 'fun' and 'friendly'.

## **Leadership and management**

Leaders, including members of the governing body, have successfully led the transition from school to academy. Safeguarding arrangements are robust and effective. The headteacher inspires staff in developing a culture of high expectations in the quality of education, behaviour and personal development. Leaders have been highly successful in developing a curriculum that encourages pupils to work hard in lessons, develop an understanding of the wider world and grow as individuals. Pupils are very enthusiastic about the range of visits and activities that are available. They reflect with excitement on the opportunities they have seen previous pupils experience which they look forward to when their turn comes. These opportunities include a trip to visit the Houses of Parliament and a residential trip to France where pupils visit and learn about The Somme. Excellent links with other schools have been established to ensure pupils develop an understanding of the rich cultural heritage within the United Kingdom. Opportunities like these, the wide range of extra curricular activities and the significant links with the parish church contribute to the highly effective provision to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Leaders monitor the work of the academy carefully. Recent changes in some leadership roles mean that this aspect of their work is less well developed in mathematics but, during inspection, the new mathematics coordinator displayed a perceptive understanding of the ways that outcomes in mathematics can be improved. Where leadership roles are more established, it is clear that their monitoring and evaluation has led to sustainable improvements in provision. Attendance has improved over the last 12 months as a result of exceptionally focused work in partnership with the education welfare officer. It has improved from broadly average to high. Promotion of equality of opportunity is good. The progress made by groups and individuals is carefully monitored to ensure that any underachievement is quickly tackled. Leaders have responded well to the increasing number of pupils who need additional support because they are at an early stage of speaking English. This support has had a positive impact on their achievement and engagement in school life. Capacity to improve further is good, as demonstrated through these improvements and the academy's continued good track record of achievement.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding academy provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of an academy. An academy that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory academy is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate academy 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 academies

Type of academy	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of academies)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery academies	46	46	8	0
Primary academies	8	47	40	5
Secondary academies	14	38	40	8
Special academies	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All academies	11	46	38	6

New academy 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 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the academy inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained academy inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of academies inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all academies nationally, as weaker academies are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding academies.

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

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 academy and in lessons, taking into account the academy'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 academy.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the academy to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the academy has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
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 academy.
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 an academy's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the academy.
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 academy, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the academy promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**This letter is provided for the academy, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their academy.**



19 January 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Holy Cross Catholic Academy, Harlow, CM18 6JJ**

Thank you for the welcome you gave to me and additional inspector, Penny Spencer, when we inspected your academy recently.

This letter is to let you know what we found. We found that you go to a good academy. You are right to be proud to be a member of this academy. You are well looked after, grow into well-rounded young people and learn well in your lessons.

The discussions we had with some of you helped us to determine what your academy needs to do to become even better.

You told us that sometimes you do not always understand how things work in mathematics and we have asked your academy to make sure that throughout the academy you get the opportunity to talk about the mathematics you are doing so you fully understand the purpose behind the calculations that you perform.

We have also asked your academy to make sure you get really good guidance in all classes to improve your work. This means that some of you will see your work being marked in more detail and your teachers will have more conversations with you about how you can improve what you are doing. This does not mean that your work is wrong, but it will help you to make it even better. This guidance will help you to see how these improvements can be made as quickly as possible.

I would like to finish by saying how impressed we were with your good behaviour around school and with the way that older pupils took on responsibilities with maturity. You really are a credit to yourselves, your parents and carers and your teachers. I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Michael Sheridan  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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