

Waltham Holy Cross Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114916
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	378959
Inspection dates	7–8 December 2011
Reporting inspector	Brian Netto

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	318
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kate Broder
Headteacher	Diane Stygal
Date of previous school inspection	15 September 2008
School address	Quendon Drive Waltham Abbey EN9 1LG
Telephone number	01992 712775
Fax number	01992 651621
Email address	admin@walthamholycross-jun.essex.sch.uk

Age group	7–11
Inspection date(s)	7–8 December 2011
Inspection number	378959

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2011



Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 17 lessons or part lessons taught by 13 teachers. They met with staff, members of the governing body and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at school plans, records of pupils' progress, school policies, minutes of meetings and school self-evaluation documents. They received and analysed 77 questionnaires from parents and carers, and also surveys from pupils and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The progress and learning of all pupils given their starting points, and the impact of measures taken to narrow gaps in achievement.
- The provision for pupils in English, and the progress made by middle and higher ability pupils in writing and reading.
- The accuracy of the school's monitoring and evaluation strategies in supporting and driving improvement, and the impact of leaders on improving outcomes for pupils.

Information about the school

The school is a larger than average-sized junior school. A large majority of the pupils are from a White British background. A very small minority come from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds and a few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to the national average. The school has received a number of awards including Healthy School Status, International School Award and Eco-Schools Green Flag Award.

The school runs a breakfast club and an after school club called Kid's Cabin. These are the responsibility of the governing body.

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: how good is the school?**3****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****2**

Main findings

This is a satisfactory and improving school. The school has made significant improvements since the last inspection, led by a determined headteacher who has ensured that all staff share her high expectations. Leadership has been strengthened through a restructuring of the staff team, and effective systems of monitoring and evaluation which have contributed to significant improvements in provision, especially in the quality of teaching. The school has also made improvements to the curriculum which is well matched to the needs of all pupils, including those with specific learning needs. Care, guidance and support for pupils are now outstanding, and attendance is high. Members of the governing body are playing an increasing role in supporting and challenging the school. However, both new and experienced governors are not sufficiently informed about the work of the school because they rely too heavily on leaders' evaluations. Nevertheless, as a result of strengthened leadership and management and recent improvements, the school has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

Teaching has been strengthened and is now securing better rates of progress and as a result standards are rising, particularly in mathematics. However in some lessons there is sometimes a lack of attention to developing reading and writing through linking letters and sounds. These recent improvements in teaching have as yet to secure consistently good progress across the school in all subjects. Nonetheless, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress, and sometimes outstanding progress. This is the result of careful tracking, well-targeted interventions and rigorous evaluation of the impact of provision which contribute to their success. They are given good support in lessons, and through small targeted group work.

Pupils' good behaviour is evident in the way they eagerly respond to exciting teaching, and engage fully in learning opportunities. Pupils' understanding of healthy lifestyles is outstanding. They act as health ambassadors to the school and community, setting an example through the eco-committee work on the school's vegetable patch. Pupils enjoy coming to school, feel safe whilst there and take a very active role in their learning, and this is reflected in their high attendance. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and is seen in the good behaviour and the way pupils relate to each other. They are curious and enthusiastic about learning, and are given lots of opportunities to respond to cultural and sporting activities.

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

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before the next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the rates of progress in reading and writing so that attainment is at least in line with national averages by May 2013, by:
 - developing a more structured approach to the teaching of reading and writing so that pupils make more rapid progress year on year
 - ensuring consistency in the quality of teaching so that a higher proportion is outstanding, leading to accelerated progress in all subjects.
- Improve the effectiveness of the governing body by:
 - ensuring that they monitor the work of the school through first hand observations so that they are able to play a more influential role in determining the strategic direction of the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils enter the school with attainment that is broadly average. This was confirmed by inspectors looking at a range of evidence. Overall, progress across the school is satisfactory although inspection evidence from observations and scrutiny of pupils' work indicate that the majority of pupils are now making more rapid progress, particularly in mathematics. In Year 6 pupils are performing at expected levels, reflecting the impact of improved provision. This includes pupils of average and higher ability. More-able pupils are now producing more sustained and independent writing of a good quality. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are also making more rapid progress. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. This is because teaching assistants work closely with teachers so that no one is left behind. Some pupils receive small group support for short periods and this also contributes to their good progress.

Pupils show good attitudes to their learning, behave well and take a full part in the lesson. For example, pupils in Year 3 explored characters in a story to help develop empathy through small group work. The activities encouraged effective speaking and listening skills, and pupils were able to respond to questions in the role of the characters. Year 5 pupils responded enthusiastically to challenging questions about the properties of different shapes, and were able to apply this to a problem-solving activity which helped to develop their mathematical language. Year 6 pupils were thoroughly engaged in a code breaking activity which brought together a range of calculation skills, and helped to promote confidence in using mathematical language. Challenge in problem solving was well matched to their abilities and this promoted good progress. Another Year 6 class used typical newspaper headlines and pictures to develop an understanding of media reporting. Careful questioning by the teacher

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

enabled the pupils to develop good analysis of different texts, and provide an excellent platform for creative news writing. This was demonstrated during the school play 'Christmas is Cancelled'. This Victorian morality play involved the whole school and enabled pupils to learn about moral and social issues. Parents and carers watching saw confident and articulate performers. Pupils were wholly engaged in their play and showed great maturity in performing in front of their parents and carers.

Pupils say they feel safe, and their parents and carers agree with them. Their understanding of how to keep safe, for example when using the internet, is good. Pupils' good behaviour contributes strongly to their learning; they have positive attitudes, are keen to learn, and around the school their behaviour is often exemplary. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and wider community. For example, the annual King Harold Day festival held in the abbey church draws together the whole community and pupils from the school regularly perform. Pupils have produced stunning murals, mosaics and tapestry wall displays to reflect their work on the King. The eco-committee have helped produce a fruit and vegetable garden and demonstrated their awareness of sustainability and healthy eating by cooking some of the vegetables as part of their lunch. These sorts of activities have been recognised in the Eco-Schools Green Flag and Healthy School awards. Pupils' high attendance, good personal skills and their ability to use basic skills in different contexts ensures that they are adequately prepared for the next stage of education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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

Inspectors' observations of teaching closely matched the school's own evaluations and clearly indicate that the overall quality of teaching is improving securely. Most lessons are well planned so that pupils' needs are suitably met. Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace, supported by effective assessment techniques, including teacher questioning, and regular checking of learning by the teacher with pupils using positive statements against which to assess their own success. Marking is consistent across the school. Pupils are praised for demonstrating key skills, and are provided with good guidance on next steps. They are helped to identify how well they are doing through the use of assessment sheets. However, in a minority of lessons, tasks are not sufficiently varied or interesting, and too little attention is given to pupils' development of language.

The curriculum has been redesigned to enable the school to better meet the needs of all pupils. The recent curriculum focus on improving basic skills has been balanced by providing a range of opportunities for pupils to extend their learning through themes and topics. This is enriched by a wide range of after-school clubs which have a high take up. Clubs include different sports such as fencing, arts and crafts, and animation and film work. A residential for Year 6 pupils in France allows further cultural development and opportunities for them to speak French with French people.

Pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable receive close attention and support, and as a result many make good personal and academic progress. The level of care, guidance and support shown is outstanding. The school works extremely well with a range of external agencies to support these needs. The provision at breakfast club and in the Kid's Cabin is outstanding, as this provides opportunities for pupils to socialise and enjoy learning in a safe environment.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has effectively steered the school through a turbulent year during which there were significant staffing issues which contributed towards a dip in performance in 2011. The restructured senior team now provide good leadership across the school. For example, the school has an accurate assessment of strengths and areas for development particularly in the quality of teaching. Concerted action to improve teaching, through coaching and mentoring, has resulted in teaching which is now consistently good. As these developments are recent they have not yet had an

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

impact on pupils' overall achievement. Rigorous monitoring and evaluation systems are beginning to impact on other areas, such as better planning to meet the needs of all abilities. The appointment of an additional teacher is helping to raise achievement still further in Years 5 and 6, and there is a more focused drive on improving basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Pupils are placed in groups so that their needs are more easily met. One parent said: 'I am happy with the way the school is run... my son has an excellent teacher'.

Governance is satisfactory. The governing body has experienced difficulties in recruitment in recent months, but they have supported the school through a difficult period and have ensured that statutory duties including safeguarding are met.

Effective partnerships with local schools and specialist agencies contribute particularly to promoting the positive well-being of the pupils, as well as curriculum innovation, and professional development for staff. Parents and carers are regularly involved in school events, and this strong partnership contributes to a number of good outcomes. This is reflected in the very positive response to the Ofsted survey, and in the attendance at the school's play. Communications with parents and carers are regular and varied and keep them well informed.

Equality of opportunity is good as reflected in the strong relationships which pupils have with each other, and the fact that the school has narrowed gaps in achievement between boys and girls. Effective support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities enables good learning and progress for these pupils so the gap between the lowest attaining pupils and the national average is narrowing. The school's contribution to community cohesion is good, though there is some unevenness between the different aspects. There are well established international links, and these are recognised in the International School Award, and good local links. Opportunities for pupils to meet or communicate with other more culturally diverse parts of the United Kingdom are however, infrequent.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3

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

The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

The response rate to the Ofsted survey was below the national average. A very large majority of parents and carers who returned the form were very positive in their responses. A small number raised concerns about different matters, including how the school takes account of their suggestions and concerns, and how it meets the specific needs of the pupils. During the inspection, inspectors found communication and consultation with parents and carers to be regular and effective. In addition, the needs of pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable are being met exceptionally well.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Waltham Holy Cross Junior School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 77 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 318 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	40	52	35	45	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	47	61	26	34	4	5	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	26	34	43	56	6	8	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	31	40	32	42	12	16	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	31	40	35	45	6	8	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	40	32	42	10	13	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	22	29	51	66	4	5	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	20	26	45	58	5	6	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	27	35	34	44	10	13	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	31	38	49	7	9	5	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	22	42	55	10	13	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	30	39	33	43	8	10	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	31	40	33	43	7	9	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and 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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



9 December 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Waltham Holy Cross Junior School, Waltham Abbey, EN9 1LG

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed finding out about your life in school and about how you contribute to the school through the school council and the eco-committee for example. You enjoy school, and this is reflected in your excellent attendance. We think that your behaviour is good, and you show great respect and care for each other. We were very impressed by how confident and mature you were when you performed your Christmas play in front of your parents and carers. I was not able to stay until the end but some of you told me that Christmas was not cancelled!

We think that your school is a satisfactory but improving school. There are several features which are good or even better. For example, your progress is improving because teachers plan interesting lessons where you learn a lot. You told us that you feel very safe, and the school looks after you really well. Many of you are really good ambassadors for the school's promotion of healthy lifestyles, for example in growing and cooking your own food.

The headteacher and her staff are working hard to make your school even better. We have asked them to provide more opportunities for you to develop your reading and writing skills. We have also suggested improving teaching so that more is good or better and your progress improves. We have asked that all school leaders check more regularly on how the school is doing so that the improvements continue.

Your school is getting better. We know you will continue to behave well and attend regularly. We wish you all the best in the future.

Yours sincerely

Brian Netto
Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.**