

# Holy Cross CofE Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	135720
<b>Local Authority</b>	Oldham
<b>Inspection number</b>	343816
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 December 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Keith Bardon

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	450
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Marlene Armitage
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Diane Blomeley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Ruth Street Oldham Greater Manchester OL1 3EZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 7705522
<b>Fax number</b>	0161 6264831
<b>Email address</b>	d.blomeley@holycross.oldham.sch.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 27 lessons and observed 17 teachers. They held meetings with staff, pupils and members of the governing body, and talked informally with parents and carers. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation including policies, improvement plans, pupils' work and the school's records indicating pupils' progress and attainment. The inspectors also analysed the 213 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

The inspection reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- The progress made by different groups of pupils.
- How well teachers match work to pupils' learning needs and how this affects the progress they make.
- The impact of the school's efforts to improve attendance.
- How well the amalgamation of the two schools has been led and managed.
- The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

## Information about the school

Holy Cross is a large primary school with almost twice as many pupils as most primary schools nationally. It was formed through the amalgamation of two local primary schools, one infant and one junior, and opened in April 2009. This is its first inspection. Approximately two-thirds of pupils are of minority ethnic heritage, predominantly Bangladeshi. Many of these pupils speak English as an additional language and are quite often at an early stage in learning English when they start school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is a little above average and a small number of pupils have a statement for their special educational needs. The school is an Investor in People and has Healthy School status. A breakfast club is available to pupils at the start of each day.

**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?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

The amalgamation of the former infant and junior schools has been led and managed extremely well and Holy Cross has quickly become a good school. Visitors are struck by the very calm atmosphere which prevails throughout, stemming from the excellent relationships staff have with pupils and the good standard of behaviour pupils demonstrate. Pupils from a wide range of cultural and religious backgrounds get on extremely well together and the school is a harmonious and welcoming community. They enjoy school thoroughly, achieve well and make good progress both academically and in their personal development.

Children's achievements and the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory. Since taking up the appointment a short while ago, the leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage has made a number of well-judged changes which are bringing about improvement. However, these have still to take full effect. Staff collect a range of information about the children and the progress they are making but are not yet using it well enough to plan the next steps in their learning. Provision out of doors lacks some of the stimulus needed to ensure consistently high quality learning and is not as good as that provided indoors.

The quality of care, guidance and support provided is exemplary and gives pupils a strong sense of security and well-being. Teaching is good and pupils benefit from a lively and creative curriculum which they find interesting and fun. Pupils respond readily when asked a question but their answers are often rather short and do not often make full use of what they know and understand. While staff have a clear understanding of the context in which the school works and community cohesion is promoted well within school and in the immediate locality, the school has very few links nationally and internationally.

Leaders and managers have put in place an ambitious programme of development which is moving the school forward at a good pace. Improvement in the short time since the school opened is clearly evident and a very strong 'can do' attitude is shared by staff and pupils alike. The school's performance is monitored continuously and rigorously by all staff with leadership and management responsibilities. Regular and detailed evaluations of the impact of provision on pupils' achievements and learning are readily available, enabling sharply focused plans for development to be constructed. The factors combine to give the school good capacity for sustained improvement.

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

- Increase the rate of progress children make in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
- - making better use of the information gathered about children's progress to plan activities that focus sharply on what they need to learn next

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- - improving the quality of activities and resources out of doors so that they at least match those provided indoors.
- Enhance pupils' learning by promoting their ability to answer questions in depth and make full use of what they know and understand.
- Widen the contribution the school makes to community cohesion by making links with schools and organisations beyond the immediate locality.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****2**

Pupils' enjoyment of learning shines through in all lessons because, as they told inspectors, 'we do the right amount of work and have the right amount of fun'. They approach everything they are asked to do in the same positive manner, listen closely to their teachers and follow instructions carefully. Most pupils take a pride in their work and concentrate hard until a task is complete. They welcome opportunities to work with others, listening carefully to what each is saying and sharing their ideas openly.

From a low starting point on entry, children make steady progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, despite the improvements they make, children's attainment is often some way short of age-related expectations by the end of Reception. Pupils achieve well in Key Stages 1 and 2, making significant gains in knowledge, understanding and skills in many lessons. Their attainment rises and by the end of Year 6, standards in English and mathematics are below but not significantly below average. There is little difference in the attainment of boys and girls or between minority ethnic and White British pupils and all make equally good progress. Pupils who are at an early stage in learning English are supported well and make good progress in language acquisition, which enables them to learn effectively alongside other pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress in response to the extensive and very well-considered strategies the school has in place to support their learning.

Pupils feel the school is a 'really safe' place to be, and support their views with many examples of the help they have received from staff and other pupils. With very few exceptions, pupils are polite, well-mannered and well behaved both in and out of lessons. They appreciate the need for a healthy lifestyle and demonstrate a good understanding of what this involves. Pupils from a wide range of different backgrounds work and play happily together and show a great deal of respect for each other's cultures and religions. They readily help others, and older pupils in particular willingly take on tasks such as 'playground buddies'. They learn about citizenship and show a strong sense of responsibility when helping to make decisions through the learning and school councils. Average attendance combined with a steadily developing range of basic skills, including literacy and numeracy, provides a satisfactory foundation for the future. Pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong and develop a good understanding of the diverse nature of different communities.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

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

## How effective is the provision?

Detailed and comprehensive planning ensures that lessons run smoothly and build securely on pupils' prior learning. Using good subject knowledge, teachers provide activities and experiences that generate high levels of interest and encourage pupils to get involved. Teachers make their high expectations clear and challenge pupils of all abilities with activities that are matched carefully to their needs. Teachers often ask open questions which give scope for a detailed response, but do not always follow them through and opportunities to encourage pupils to extend their answers are missed. Teaching assistants are generally deployed well and are particularly effective when leading small groups of pupils who need additional help. New work is introduced and discussed thoroughly, although occasionally teachers spend too much time talking before setting pupils off on their individual tasks. Teachers check pupils' learning frequently as the lesson develops, drawing them together for further instruction when necessary and celebrating good pieces of work openly.

While there is still a little work to do to ensure it reflects all the skills pupils need to acquire, the curriculum has many good features. Creative themes such as 'Could I be a fashion designer?' and 'What happened before there was a fire brigade?' combine with regular 'super learning days' to provide a stimulating and exciting programme of work. Many of the themes have close links with pupils' personal development and considering 'How can we ensure we have a harmonious community?' does much for pupils'

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understanding of the diverse community in which they are growing up. The learning council made up of pupils from different classes and a senior member of staff meets regularly to share views and to plan additions to the curriculum. This and other initiatives ensure that the curriculum reflects pupils' interests closely and helps to give them ownership over what they are learning.

All pupils receive the highest standards of care, guidance and support from staff who know them extremely well. Highly effective assessment and monitoring procedures quickly identify pupils who have additional learning needs or need help with English, enabling support from skilled and experienced staff to be put in place. The impact of this support is evaluated rigorously to ensure pupils are gaining maximum benefit. An extremely careful watch is kept over those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable and the school utilises its very close links with wide range of agencies to provide the additional care some pupils need. Procedures for ensuring pupils transfer smoothly from one phase of their education to the next work extremely well. The school employs a range of very effective strategies to promote good attendance. There has been a marked improvement in attendance so far this year coupled with a significant decline in persistent absence. The well-run breakfast club provides those who attend with an enjoyable and healthy start to the school day.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, supported by a conscientious team of senior staff, leads the school with vision and drive. Challenging targets are set and throughout the school there is unity of purpose and determination to succeed. The quality of teaching is monitored closely and carefully chosen strategies, including national training courses and targeted support from skilled practitioners, used to promote improvement. The governing body performs its statutory duties conscientiously and is very supportive of the school. It has still to come together as a fully cohesive team and some governors have a much clearer understanding of how to hold the school to account than others. The school is an inclusive community in which equality of opportunity is promoted well. Thorough checks are made on pupils' progress and measured steps taken to ensure no pupils are discriminated against. Consequently, there is very little difference in the progress made by different groups of pupils.

Safeguarding procedures are rigorous and effective. Policies and guidelines are reviewed regularly and systematic checks made to ensure they are implemented fully. The contribution the school makes to community cohesion has good elements but lacks

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breadth and is satisfactory overall. The school keeps parents well informed and works hard to engage them in their children's learning. A wide range of partnership activities, including well-established links with local churches and the community police, make a strong contribution to pupils' personal and academic development, and well-being.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter Nursery with skills and abilities that are often well below those typical for their age and particularly low in communication and language. They respond well to the care and attention paid to them by all staff and settle in well. Children's progress across the different areas of learning is satisfactory and accelerates in Reception in response to better quality teaching and more imaginative and stimulating activities. Good provision is made for children who are at an early stage in learning English and they are supported well. Many make good gains in spoken English and it is not long before they are working and playing contentedly alongside other children. Children enjoy very positive relationships with adults, behave well and happily follow the well-established class routines. Activities are matched well to the age of the children and provide plenty of opportunities for exploration and discovery. Inside the Reception classrooms the igloo, jelly tray and glittering water are grabbing children's attention, stimulating their curiosity and providing plenty of opportunity for imaginative play. Activities in the outside area provide less stimulus and opportunities are missed to promote and extend pupils' learning. Since her appointment, the Early Years Foundation Stage leader has worked purposefully to improve provision. Staff morale is high and they are working well together to implement new initiatives. Links with parents are positive and those who spoke to inspectors expressed that they were happy with the information they receive about their children's development.



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*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	3
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

## Views of parents and carers

The number of inspection questionnaires returned by parents and carers was high. A very large majority of parents and carers hold very positive views of the school and are happy with the quality of education their children receive. They describe the school as one which provides a 'stimulating, safe and positive environment' for their children. A small percentage of parents would like the school to take more account of their views. Inspectors looked at the way the school communicates with parents and carers and identified many good links. Members of the governing body will be looking at ways in which they can have more regular contact with parents which will improve communication further. A number of parents and carers commented on the inconsiderate way some cars are parked when children are being dropped off at school. This is outside the remit of this inspection but the school is aware of the problem and is constantly looking for ways to address it.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Holy Cross CofE Primary 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 213 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 450 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	144	68	67	31	1	0	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	154	72	56	26	2	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	119	56	90	42	2	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	103	48	104	49	5	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	124	58	85	40	3	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	106	50	98	46	5	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	102	48	100	47	6	3	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)	90	42	118	55	2	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	99	46	105	49	5	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	92	43	115	54	5	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	79	37	118	55	9	4	1	0
The school is led and managed effectively	96	45	108	51	2	1	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	121	57	85	40	3	1	1	0

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## 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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



16 December 2010

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Holy Cross CofE Primary School, Oldham, OL1 3EZ**

Thank you very much for the very friendly greeting you gave the inspectors when we visited recently. We thoroughly enjoyed finding out about the work you do, and special thanks go to those who talked with us about the school.

Holy Cross is a good school and we understand fully why you enjoy it so much. There is a lovely atmosphere and it was nice to see how well you all get along and respect each other. Staff take extremely good care of you and we know you appreciate all the help, support and guidance they provide. We were pleased with how hard you work in lessons. This shows a very positive attitude to learning and does you a great deal of credit. Your behaviour is good and you can be very proud of the way you grow into sensible and caring young people.

The progress you make is good because you are taught well and work hard. By the end of Year 6 most of you are producing work that is close to the level expected for your age. We enjoyed looking at your work because many of you write neatly and clearly. When we visited lessons we were pleased by how readily you answer teachers' questions but noticed that your answers are often quite short. We have asked teachers to help you give more detailed answers and make full use of the many things you already know and understand. The school has a strong sense of community and we feel that now is the time to broaden this out by making links with school and organisations that are in different parts of the country and other parts of the world. The activities provided in the Early Years Foundation Stage are not always as well organised as those in the rest of the school, particularly in the outside area, and we have asked the school to look at ways to improve them. Thank you once again for a very enjoyable two days and best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mr Keith Bardon  
Lead inspector

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