

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103474
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	355387
Inspection dates	23–24 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Ruth Westbrook

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	211
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tony McGuigan
Headteacher	Jackie Deasy
Date of previous school inspection	18 September 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 18 lessons and observed nine teachers. Meetings were held with the Chair and previous Chair of the Governing Body, senior and middle managers and a group of parents and carers. Inspectors spoke to two groups of pupils. The inspection team observed the school's work, and looked at improvement plans, key policy documents, assessment information, minutes of the governing body and pupils' books. In addition, 103 responses to the parents' and carers' questionnaire were received and analysed, together with questionnaire responses from staff and 115 pupils from Key Stage 2.

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

- How well do teachers use assessment to plan for the pupils in their class and does the feedback given to pupils on their work help them to improve?
- How effective is the curriculum in promoting the use of skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology?
- What is the contribution made by leaders at all levels to the school's capacity for improvement?

Information about the school

This is an average-sized primary school where the Early Years Foundation Stage is provided in one Reception class. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below average. Most pupils are of White British heritage. There are very few pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The school achieved the Healthy Schools award in 2009. The governing body runs a before-and after-school club, Kids' Club, on the school site.

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

This is a good school which has improved significantly since its last inspection under the effective leadership of the headteacher. Pupils' achievement is now outstanding because senior leaders have focused on improving the quality of provision. Teaching and the use of assessment, the curriculum and care, guidance and support have all improved considerably and are now good. Senior leaders have set clear direction through well thought out plans for development. These have been effective in driving improvement because they are well-founded on a thorough and accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This good track record of development demonstrates the school's good capacity for further improvement.

All members of the school community have contributed to a clear set of values which are rooted in the strong links between school and the church. As one parent described, 'School, church and home are one and the same community.' These values underpin outstanding spiritual development, good behaviour and good moral, social and cultural development. Outstanding policies and procedures are in place to ensure that pupils are safe. These, and an ambitious building project which has transformed the learning environment, lead to pupils feeling extremely safe in school.

The curriculum provides well-planned opportunities for pupils to practise literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills. This was seen in Year 6 where work on a fairground project gave many opportunities for pupils to apply basic skills and develop their enterprise and interpersonal skills. The consistent development of these skills, along with excellent attendance and exemplary punctuality, means that pupils are extremely well prepared for the next step of their education. Teachers plan lessons well, providing activities and resources to meet the range of abilities within the class. As a result, pupils of all abilities make good progress in lessons. Occasionally during the opening part of lessons, teachers talk to the class as a whole for too long or target questions and activities at the middle of the ability range and a minority lose concentration. This is particularly the case for the most and least able pupils. Teachers assess and mark pupils' work regularly. There is good practice in involving pupils in assessing how well they have met a learning target. Nevertheless, marking is inconsistent in that some pupils are not given clear guidance on their next steps in learning and are not encouraged to put them into practice.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the pace of learning during the first part of lessons so that time is used more effectively and the most capable and least able pupils make more progress by:
 - reducing the amount of time teachers talk to the class as a whole

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- ensuring questions and activities during these sessions match the full range of abilities within the class.
- Ensure consistency in the use of assessment by making sure that teachers include next steps for an individual pupil in their marking and that pupils are encouraged to use these steps to extend their learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

When children enter Reception, they have skills and abilities which are above those expected for their age. Achievement is outstanding because pupils make good progress and attainment is high by the end of Year 6 in English and mathematics. There has been an improvement in attainment in mathematics since the last inspection. Both boys and girls make good progress. The support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is targeted appropriately and helps pupils make good progress towards their individual targets which they know and understand well. The very few pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress. They benefit from a proactive approach in Reception, where they and their families are helped very quickly to practise and understand the English language. The quality of learning in lessons is good. Pupils find the enrichment afternoons in the newly launched curriculum particularly motivating. They enjoy the many opportunities to be actively involved in their learning and they rise to challenges which are presented. Pupils collaborate constructively when sharing ideas with others. Their keenness to get on with their learning was observed at the start of a Year 6 literacy lesson where pupils very quickly prepared for work and all were engaged and challenged by the range of activities included in the introduction to the lesson. The pace was fast and the quality of learning good as a result. Pupils were well prepared to move on to the next stage of their education. Pupils say they feel bored when they have to listen for too long and a number lose concentration when the work is too easy or too hard. Pupils behave well in lessons and this contributes towards the good quality of learning.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to be healthy which contributed to the Healthy Schools award last year. Large numbers take part in additional sport and exercise at school including a daily 'wake up and shake up' session. Pupils of all ages readily take up responsibilities as peer mentors, buddies and monitors. The school council members are actively involved in planning improvements to the school such as the recent re-design to the buildings. All pupils actively engage in raising funds for charity and this is often linked to developing enterprise skills. There is good involvement in the local community through the partnership with the church.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	1
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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ 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?

In the large majority of lessons, teaching is good. Assessment is used well to plan thoroughly for the different ability groups within the class and teaching assistants are used effectively to support this. In a Year 2 lesson on data collecting and recording, very careful planning of a range of activities matched to the different abilities meant all pupils were challenged at an appropriate level and all made good progress in their learning. The teacher and teaching assistant worked together skilfully to facilitate the learning. Resources, including interactive white-boards, are used well. What pupils will learn in the lesson is shared clearly at the start, as are the steps to take to be successful in learning. The policy of including a difficult challenge in these steps is used well. All members of the class form positive relationships which promote learning. Occasionally, during the introduction to the lesson teachers talk for too long or do not ensure that there are introductory activities and questions to stimulate the range of abilities within the group. As a result, the pace of learning slows, especially for the most capable pupils who require more challenge and for the least-able pupils who need more support. Assessment of pupils' work is thorough and marking is frequent. It almost always tells pupils what they have done well and how they have met the learning intention. On a few occasions, it does not set the next steps for pupils on how to extend their learning.

The introduction this year of a curriculum which uses topics to develop skills and abilities has the seal of approval from pupils and parents and carers who commented to inspectors

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on the interest and enjoyment which is being promoted. The study of topics is supported by a good range of visits which are used well to encourage learning. There is careful planning to ensure that the topics promote opportunities to practise key skills. This was seen during the inspection when Year 2 pupils skilfully researched celebrations on computers, used writing skills to make notes and then chose ways to present their information to others. The pupils enjoyed the activity and learnt well, taking great care to write, sometimes at great length, with a particular purpose in mind.

The support and care for pupils with particular needs is good. There are clear behaviour management strategies which are used well in classrooms, but there are some inconsistencies in their application on the playground at lunch-time. Productive partnerships are established with a number of external organisations, both to support pupils' development and the curriculum. Particularly strong is the link with the secondary school which supports the music and foreign language curriculum while establishing firm relationships to aid transition at the end of Year 6. Communication with parents and carers is good. They told inspectors how they can approach staff easily with concerns and that they are consulted on changes such as the recent change to sports kit. Working parents commented particularly on the value of text-messages from school. The Kids Club provides a safe, happy and stimulating environment for pupils of all ages before and after school.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders share the same ambitious vision and this is well understood by all members of the school community. Leaders' views of the school are informed well by frequent and systematic monitoring of its work. Plans are quickly put in place to improve on any identified area of weakness and these are clearly communicated to all staff. A good programme of professional development is in place to ensure that staff have the skills necessary to implement plans. The progress of pupils is checked rigorously and frequently and if underachievement is identified, there is a well thought out system of intervention to remedy this. Through these systems, school leaders ensure the equal opportunities policy is carefully monitored. If there is variation in the performance of groups, necessary action is taken to improve provision. For example, strategies implemented to improve girls' performance in mathematics have resulted in them consistently reaching high standards. The governing body is fully involved in this work and in planning for the school's future. Its members know the school well through their work with staff, pupils, parents and carers. The promotion of community cohesion is good because leaders have carried out a thorough analysis of the school's context, and is developing cultural links with different communities elsewhere to promote greater cultural understanding. This includes a letter

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exchange with a predominantly Muslim school. Procedures for safeguarding are outstanding. Recording of information for checks on staff and visitors is carried out meticulously. Pupils' views are sought when staff assess risks on school visits. The curriculum promotes an excellent understanding of safety amongst pupils of the dangers they might face in and out of school and particularly when using the internet.

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	2
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children are taught well within a stimulating environment so that they make good progress. Children are happy, enthusiastic and well behaved and clearly enjoy school. They respond well to encouragement to be independent and many show this in following school routines and in tackling activities. Children form good relationships with each other, cooperate well and help each other to learn. The indoor and outdoor space provides a positive learning environment. Planning is comprehensive so that adults and other resources are well deployed to support children and ensure that they make good progress. Assessment is thorough and clearly linked to plans so that adults are aware of the next steps for children. The school establishes good relationships with children and parents and carers before term starts and these relationships are consolidated as term progresses. Parents and carers value the encouragement to be involved in their children's learning by working alongside them on particular sessions. The leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage, as a member of the senior leadership team, ensures that the stage is fully integrated into the school's plans. The staff team includes new and well-established members who are working well together to embed current processes. There are excellent procedures in place to ensure that children are safeguarded in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Very good links are established with the school's Kids' Club which ensures continuity of learning for Reception children.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	2
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The return from parents and carers was higher than usual. The very large majority of these are happy with their children's experiences, and these views are endorsed by the findings of the inspection. They are particularly positive that the school keeps their children safe and helps them to have a healthy lifestyle. As one parent said, 'It is reassuring to know and see that our children attend a safe, happy and spiritual school.' A number of parents and carers have commented on the improvements they have seen to the school over the last few years, some mentioning particularly the impact on their children of improvements to the curriculum. Of greatest concern to parents and carers is the level of staff turnover which their children have experienced and the way in which the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. All concerns were shared with school leaders. They are very aware of the effect of staff leaving during a school year, and have, when necessary, tried to minimise the impact as far as possible. Inspectors' findings about pupils' behaviour are included in the report. Behaviour was found to be good particularly in classrooms and inside the school building. Inspectors found the limitation of playing space during the winter months does have a small impact on behaviour.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Holy Cross Catholic 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 103 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 211 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	56	55	43	42	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	63	62	39	38	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	40	39	53	52	7	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	45	44	45	44	5	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	49	48	46	45	3	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	46	45	53	52	3	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	45	44	57	56	0	0	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)	44	43	50	49	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	43	42	49	48	5	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	35	34	51	50	10	10	4	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	33	32	53	52	8	8	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	47	46	44	43	3	3	5	5
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	49	48	43	42	4	4	0	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). 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">■ 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.



25 November 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Holy Cross Catholic Primary School, Sutton Coldfield, B76 2SP

Thank you for giving us such a warm welcome on our recent visit, and for sharing your views about the school in discussions and through questionnaires. These have been very helpful. Now I would like to share with you what we found out.

Your school provides you with a good standard of education.

You make good progress in your work and reach high standards in English and mathematics by the time you leave. You know very well how to use your literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills to study other subjects. You are developing excellent enterprise skills through activities such as fund-raising.

You make a positive contribution to the school being a happy and caring community. Many of you take on responsibilities to help others. It was good to see so many older pupils taking care of younger ones.

You have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe. You demonstrate this well as you move around school and play in a playground which in winter is very small. As a result, you told us how safe you feel in school.

You have a good understanding of how to keep yourselves healthy and enjoy taking part in sport clubs and teams and 'wake up and shake up' to keep yourselves fit.

Your headteacher and her staff care for you very well. You enjoy school very much and told us how much you like your new curriculum topics and enrichment activities.

We have asked the school to do two things to make it even better:

- to make sure that the introductions to lessons are not too long and that during them you are all involved in activities and questions so that you do not lose concentration
- to always include your next steps when teachers mark your work and we would like you to read those steps and then act on them in your next pieces of work.

We hope that you will do your best to help your headteacher and her staff to put these plans in place by working hard and always doing your best.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Westbrook

Lead inspector

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