

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	115181
Local authority	Thurrock
Inspection number	379029
Inspection dates	14–15 June 2012
Lead inspector	Tusha Chakraborti

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	333
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rosemarie Edwards
Headteacher	Maria Shepherd
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2008
School address	Daiglen Drive South Ockendon RM15 5RP
Telephone number	01708 853000
Fax number	01708 856337
Email address	office@holycrossprimary.thurrock.sch.uk

Age group	3-11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Tusha Chakraborti

Additional Inspector

Vicky Turner

Additional Inspector

Nicholas Rudman

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 16 lessons taught by 12 teachers. They heard children reading, scrutinised pupils' work, visited assemblies and undertook other activities in order to observe pupils' learning. Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, staff, members of the governing body and groups of pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the school's self-evaluation and planning documents, safeguarding documentation, data on pupils' progress and development planning. Responses from questionnaires completed by 99 parents and carers were analysed, as well as those from 98 pupils and 41 staff.

Information about the school

This is a larger-than-average-sized primary school with one-and-a-half form entry. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic communities is above average as is the percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average. A significant number of pupils join or leave the school part way through the academic year. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in the Nursery and the Reception classes. The school meets the current government floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. The school holds Healthy School status and the Basic Skills Quality Mark and Eco-schools Bronze awards. The school has had a considerable turnover of staff since the previous inspection. It is now fully staffed.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school where the welcoming ethos supports and encourages pupils' all-round development. The standards of education in this school are improving rapidly as a result of concerted efforts made by the leadership team over the past three years to move the school forward. The school is not good because there is not yet enough good teaching to ensure that all groups of pupils make good progress. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Pupils' attainment is average by the end of Years 2 and 6, rising from below average two years ago. Pupils make satisfactory progress from their below average starting points. The rate of progress has accelerated over the past two years. This is particularly evident in the Early Years Foundation Stage where children are now making good progress in all areas of learning.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They show respect for each other and have positive attitudes to learning. This contributes well to their achievement and is supported well by the school's highly inclusive ethos. Attendance is consistently above average.
- The quality of teaching is satisfactory, with an increasing amount that is good, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Teachers have good subject knowledge and have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and work. Nonetheless, the tasks that pupils are given do not consistently provide enough challenge for the more-able pupils. Consequently, they do not always achieve the standards of which they are capable. Pupils' presentation and handwriting skills are not sufficiently developed.
- Good leadership and management ensure that the school's self-evaluation is astute. The headteacher, despite the considerable turnover in staffing, has successfully established a strong leadership team. Together, they are driving improvement and provide a shared sense of purpose to raise aspirations of pupils and staff alike. The monitoring of teaching and management of performance are good. The newly appointed middle leaders are rapidly

developing their monitoring roles, but it is too early to see the full impact of their work. The governing body has a clear understanding of the school's performance and provides good support and challenge.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching and learning from satisfactory to good or better by:
 - ensuring that learning activities provide sufficient challenges for all pupils, especially the more able, so that they all achieve as well as they can
 - making sure that pupils' presentation and handwriting skills are developed consistently across the school.

- Consolidate the role of the recently appointed middle leaders in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning so that they have a full impact on pupils' achievement.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children start in the Nursery with skills below those expected for their age, especially in communication, language and literacy. A stimulating learning environment and careful monitoring of children's progress help them to make rapid progress and to achieve average standards in all areas of learning by the time they move to Year 1. Outdoor areas have been improved since the previous inspection and are now well-resourced to stimulate children's interest and enjoyment of learning. This was seen in the Reception classes where children enjoyed discussing the 'crash landing site' of the 'Alien Zargog' and writing letters to this new friend.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and attainment is average by the end of Years 2 and 6. Standards have risen from a significantly below average level in 2009 to an average level over the past two years in English and mathematics owing to the successful teamwork of the headteacher and staff in implementing a more rigorous system for monitoring pupils' achievement. Pupils' reading and writing skills are now much improved through the development of extended writing skills and cross-curricular topic work. This has successfully narrowed the gaps in pupils' performance compared with all pupils nationally. Attainment in reading is above average by the end of Year 2 and average when pupils leave the school in Year 6. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make satisfactory progress as a result of the consistent and well-targeted support they receive from teachers and support staff. The very large majority of parents and carers are pleased with their children's education and rightly feel that achievement is rising for pupils currently in the school.

Pupils develop a clear understanding of different genres and write effectively for different purposes. Many are fluent readers and are confident in reviewing the events and characters from the books they read. Pupils engage in group and pair work

where they enthusiastically discuss their ideas before embarking on a continuous piece of writing. This was seen in a literacy lesson where Year 4 pupils used persuasive texts in designing posters for different products, using a wide range of vocabulary, including 'alliteration' to persuade customers to buy their products. Pupils use their computer skills appropriately to support their learning in other subjects, such as conducting research work while learning about different countries.

Quality of teaching

There is clear evidence from pupils' better progress that teaching, while satisfactory, is improving. Teaching is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage where a range of engaging activities captures children's imagination and moves their learning on quickly. Staff provide a welcoming environment where children become confident in pursuing indoor and outdoor activities that match their own interests as well as those directed by adults. Good links with parents and carers support children's literacy skills well. For example, in the Nursery, teachers engaged children effectively in discussing the toy animals they took home and they thoroughly enjoyed explaining how they looked after them. Parents and carers were involved well in this activity and wrote about the activities they had with their children at home. Regular teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) supports children well in rapidly developing their reading and writing skills.

In most lessons, teachers display good subject knowledge. Where teaching is good, pupils are engaged well in their learning through effective questioning that successfully builds on their prior learning. For example, in a mathematics lesson in year 6, appropriately targeted questioning enabled pupils to gain a secure knowledge and understanding of how to calculate time differences between the major cities of the world. Pupils successfully used their knowledge in geography to aid their learning in this task. Teachers make good use of technology and use the interactive whiteboards effectively to share the purpose of lessons so that pupils know what they are expected to do. They ensure that pupils use clear learning criteria to evaluate their learning and to understand what to do to improve. Planning is detailed, usually providing a range of activities for all groups of pupils. However, occasionally tasks are insufficiently challenging to extend the skills and understanding of more-able pupils. Teachers do not promote pupils' presentation and handwriting skills consistently. As a result, pupils do not develop these skills sufficiently to have a positive impact on their achievement.

Teachers promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well through group discussions and topic work. Pupils are encouraged to read stories from different cultures and they learn to value different cultural traditions. Reading is taught well throughout the school, resulting in confident readers of all ages. Most parents and carers are satisfied with the improvements in the quality of teaching their children receive.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Most parents and carers who responded to the questionnaires stated that behaviour is good and almost all feel that their children are safe at school at all times. A very

small minority of pupils caused some disruption in lessons in the past year. The school has acted swiftly and resolved these issues successfully, gaining the confidence of parents and carers and pupils. Pupils confirm this and report that they get on well with learning without disruption. On the rare occasion where behaviour is less than good, pupils state that this is dealt with effectively by adults. As a result, they feel safe and secure.

Pupils are courteous, cooperative and develop good attitudes to learning. They listen to adults and to each other with respect. They develop a good understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe. They understand the risks they face in their everyday lives; for example, they are well aware of cyber-bullying and risks from fire, and know what to do if they should encounter them. Pupils have a clear understanding of what is right or wrong and this has a positive impact on their behaviour and the inclusive ethos of the school. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is reflected well in their consideration and support for others.

Pupils take on roles of responsibility within the class, through their school council work and fundraising activities to support national and international charities. Older pupils enjoy supporting the children from the Nursery and Reception classes. Attendance has been above average consistently over the past four years, reflecting pupils' enjoyment of school.

Leadership and management

The school has a strong capacity for sustained improvement, as illustrated by the rapid rise in pupils' attainment from below expected starting points. The headteacher is highly regarded by the school community and, supported by staff and the governing body, has been instrumental in improving the school.

Senior leaders have established a rigorous programme for the monitoring of teaching and staff development through which they develop the expertise of teachers and consistently increase pupils' achievement. This is supported by effective professional development and robust performance management. As a result, teaching is improving, although not consistently good across the whole school. Assessment procedures have been strengthened to track pupils' progress more effectively and to promote a more rigorous self- and peer-assessment system. This is being implemented successfully. Accurate self-evaluation successfully informs the school's priorities for improvement planning. Middle leaders new in post have got to grips quickly with their responsibilities and are rapidly developing their monitoring roles, although it is too early for them to have a full impact on pupils' achievement. The governing body is well organised, and makes effective use of the information gained from its members' visits and that provided by the headteacher to hold the school to account for pupils' achievement.

The curriculum has a strong focus on developing literacy and numeracy skills. It has recently been reviewed to provide more cross-curricular links between literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology. This is having a positive impact on pupils' achievement, especially in writing. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues are also promoted well through the curriculum. Assemblies and

religious studies support pupils in reflecting on teachings from the Bible and on core values of different religions to gain a deeper understanding of religious and cultural diversity. A good range of art and sporting activities, as well as trips to museums and local places of interest, enrich pupils' learning experience. For example, the lunchtime club 'Change 4 life' promotes pupils' sporting and leadership skills as older pupils are taught to organise and lead the club.

The school is highly committed to promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination through sustaining improvement in the performance of different groups of pupils. Policies and procedures to ensure the safeguarding and welfare of pupils are robust and these are monitored regularly. The school has good partnerships with parents and carers, engaging them successfully in their children's learning.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school 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 to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

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

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

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.



18 June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Holy Cross Catholic Primary School, South Ockendon, RM15 5RP

Thank you all very much for welcoming us to your school and being so friendly and helpful. We were pleased to see how much you enjoy school. This is clearly reflected in your above-average rate of attendance. We think your behaviour is good and are pleased to see how considerate you are to each other in lessons and around the school. Your positive spiritual, moral, social and cultural development helps you to become confident learners. You carry out your duties, including your jobs as prefects and school council representatives, responsibly. Thank you also for the questionnaires that you filled in for the inspection and for sharing your views with us.

Your school is providing you with a satisfactory and improving quality of education. Your headteacher, staff and governors ensure that you are well cared for and want you to achieve the best you can. Your progress is satisfactory and you reach standards that are average in English and mathematics by the time you leave Year 6.

To improve your school further, we have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to:

- make sure that the work provided for you is just a bit harder to move your learning forward as rapidly as possible, especially those of you who learn quickly
- make sure that teachers with responsibility develop more expertise to help you learn more effectively and take on greater responsibility for helping to improve your school.
- make sure that your presentation and handwriting skills improve further.

You already make a good contribution to the life of the school. You can help the school to improve even further by continuing to work hard, so that your school remains a happy place.

Yours sincerely
Tusha Chakraborti
Lead Inspector

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