

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	120225
Local authority	Leicester
Inspection number	379981
Inspection dates	18–19 June 2012
Lead inspector	Krishan Sharma

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	203
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mary Lynch
Headteacher	Julia Christy
Date of previous school inspection	30 October 2008
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Krishan Sharma

Additional Inspector

David Westall

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors visited 16 lessons or parts of lessons taught by eight teachers. Two groups of Year 1 and Year 2 pupils were heard reading. Meetings were held with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, senior and middle leaders, and two groups of pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including safeguarding records, the school improvement plan, a summary of the school's self-evaluation, a range of pupils' written work, and tracking records of pupils' progress in basic skills. Sixty-eight questionnaires returned by parents and carers were analysed, as were those completed by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

Holy Cross Catholic Primary is smaller than the average-sized primary school. Just over half of its pupils come from White British backgrounds. The remainder come from various minority ethnic groups, notably from Caribbean, African, other White (East European), mixed White and Black Caribbean, or Indian backgrounds. The percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average, as is the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils who are supported at 'school action plus' or have a statement of special educational needs is above average. The school holds Healthy School status and the Activemark in recognition of its promotion of sport. The proportion of pupils who join or leave partway through their primary school education is greater than that found nationally. During the current academic year staffing in Key Stage 2 has been considerably disrupted.

The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It is not yet good because leaders’ monitoring and evaluation systems are not rigorous enough to ensure that consistently good teaching supports good overall achievement. There are some notable weaknesses in teaching in Key Stage 2 and in mathematics. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Pupils start school with attainment that is below average. Most now make good progress until the end of Year 2, but their satisfactory progress in Years 3 to 6 is not enough to raise attainment by the end of Year 6 from the average levels seen in Year 2. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve as well as other groups.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall. In the most effective lessons, teachers convey high expectations and precisely monitor pupils’ progress. When teaching is weaker, pupils, especially the most able, are not sufficiently challenged to achieve their best and lessons move at a slower pace. Teachers do not always ask searching questions, and their feedback in such lessons and in marking lacks precision.
- Behaviour and safety are satisfactory. In general, all ethnic groups relate well to each other and lessons are productive with very few interruptions to learning. Attendance remains average. Good care from adults ensures that pupils feel safe at school.
- The school’s accurate evaluation of its performance appropriately informs its key priorities for improvement and the development of teaching. Even so, the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are not always robust or detailed enough for the resulting action plans to have an effective impact on improving provision, This is because the monitoring skills of key leaders and governors are insufficiently sharp.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' ability to apply their mathematical skills by:
 - developing their use in other subjects
 - providing frequent opportunities for solving practical, real-life mathematical problems
 - promoting discussion on the methods of calculation they need to apply.

- Raise the quality of teaching so that pupils make consistently good progress, particularly during Key Stage 2, by:
 - using questioning more effectively to probe pupils' knowledge and understanding in lessons
 - planning lessons that move at a brisk pace and provide sufficiently high challenge for all pupils, especially the most able groups
 - ensuring that work planned captures pupils' interest and keeps them engaged in all lessons
 - giving clear feedback to pupils on their progress so that they know how well they have done and what they need to do next to improve their work.

- Sharpen monitoring and evaluation in the school by:
 - fine-tuning the monitoring and evaluation skills of all leaders and governors
 - concentrating on pupils' progress and learning explicitly during observations of teaching and analysis of their written work
 - using clear and measureable benchmarks in evaluating the impact of planned actions on pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children enter the nursery with skills and knowledge that are below those expected for their age, particularly in early literacy. From these starting points, children make good progress and now achieve good levels of development by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage in all areas of their learning. They go on to reach broadly average attainment at the end of Key Stage 1. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection, when standards were judged to be below average. Pupils make slower progress in Key Stage 2, but by the end of Year 6 they reach broadly average standards of attainment in English and mathematics. Attainment in reading at the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time pupils leave school at the end of Year 6 is broadly average. Overwhelmingly, parents and carers view their children's progress at school as good. Inspectors judged that pupils' progress is variable across the school and no better than satisfactory during Key Stage 2.

In the main, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and those who

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speak English as an additional language, achieve as well as other groups. Those who join the school mid-year or in different year groups make satisfactory progress from their varying starting points. Planned interventions for these groups and other vulnerable learners are making an impact, and the rate of their progress is increasing as a result. Occasionally, the most able pupils do not make the progress that they are capable of because work given to them does not take enough account of what they already know and can do.

In lessons, pupils read and write for various purposes. For example, some Year 4 pupils read a non-fiction text in their guided reading session and gathered interesting facts. Pupils' written work shows that they apply their reading and writing skills in finding the information they need for their topics and selectively summarise it in their books. In mathematics lessons, pupils enjoy using their measuring skills practically, such as measuring their jumps for their own Olympics in the Year 1 class. The application of mathematical skills in solving problems is increasing but their use in other subjects is limited. Often, pupils' skills in explaining how they would tackle a problem are limited, because they have not been consistently promoted across the school.

Quality of teaching

Most parents, carers and pupils view the quality of teaching positively. It is often good in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1. However, in Key Stage 2 unsettled staffing has contributed to inconsistency in practice and it is no better than satisfactory for this substantial age group. The systematic teaching of reading, including phonic skills (linking letters and sounds) is now well established and is beginning to make a positive impact. For example, an increasing number of pupils achieved the higher grades in reading in 2011. Those who find reading difficult, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, are clearly benefiting from well-tailored specific programmes such as Reading Recovery. As a result of the well-judged interventions, these pupils are becoming confident learners.

In all lessons, teachers make their expectations clear and encourage pupils to work hard. Additional adults are gainfully deployed. In the most effective lessons, teachers' high expectations are reflected in their persistent and deeper questioning. Tasks set are demanding for different groups, including the most able pupils, and the pace of learning is brisk. Teachers motivate pupils to learn and maintain their interest throughout the lesson, often by making learning practical and meaningful. In Reception, children's early number skills are reinforced through the use of practical apparatus. In the nursery, children were looking at and handling colourful pictures with some letters. The teacher skilfully took the opportunity to introduce sounds and promoted discussion about the content of the picture. When teaching is no more than satisfactory, these effective features are less evident. As a result, pupils make only satisfactory progress and sometimes lose interest in their work. Additionally, teachers give imprecise feedback that does not convey to pupils what they have achieved and how they can move their learning forward.

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In lessons, pupils hone their social skills by working with others. Topic work exposes them to different cultural influences through the study of different religions and geographical locations.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour in lessons and around the school is satisfactory. Most pupils engage in lessons and stay on task. Different ethnic groups relate well to each other. The general views of pupils and their parents and carers are that behaviour is good. However, a small minority of pupils raised concerns about behaviour and bullying through questionnaires and during discussions with inspectors. These concerns are also reflected in responses received from a small minority of parents and carers. In response, inspectors carried out extended discussions with pupils and first-hand observations of behaviour in various contexts. They judged that a very small number of pupils display challenging and unpredictable behaviour, particularly in Key Stage 2, but it is effectively managed so it rarely affects the learning of other pupils. They also judged that pupils are suitably aware of the different forms that bullying can take, and that instances of bullying in any form, including that which is prejudice-based, are rare and are firmly dealt with when they occur.

Good behaviour in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 has made a positive contribution to pupils' learning over time. This is evident in the improving picture of pupil outcomes. The school's systems for promoting good behaviour are well established. Adults are suitably trained to manage challenging behaviour. The designated nurture provision improves pupils' personal skills, including reflection on actions and the consequences of actions. Most pupils feel safe at school and almost all their parents and carers agree with them. Pupils show an appropriate awareness of risks, including those posed by cyber-bullying. Attendance remains average.

Leadership and management

Senior and middle leaders and managers and the governing body have agreed upon a set of priorities that represent their commitment to continuing school improvement. These are suitably informed by the school's self-evaluation, which is broadly accurate and underpins its clear capacity for improvement. However, the effectiveness of self-evaluation is occasionally restricted because the benchmarks used for evaluating the impact of planned actions are not always precise or measurable. The school has tackled substantially the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Middle leaders lead the implementation of plans, particularly in literacy and numeracy, and contribute well to their colleagues' professional development through regular feedback and coaching. This has resulted in improved planning and greater confidence in the teaching of literacy and numeracy.

The systematic tracking of pupils' progress in developing their basic skills is now a regular feature in the school's monitoring and evaluation procedures, as are the observation of teaching and the scrutiny of pupils' written work. All information gathered through these activities, particularly the scrutiny of progress data, informs

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the management of teachers' performance. However, the monitoring and evaluation skills of all leaders and governors are not sufficiently well developed through regular training. This means the observations of teaching and scrutiny of pupils' written work are not always focused enough on evaluating the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress.

The curriculum is appropriately broad and balanced. It meets the needs and interests of most groups of pupils. The most able pupils do not always benefit from the curriculum as much as they should, because planned activities do not challenge them enough. The regular provision for personal, social and health education, education for citizenship, religious education and the enrichment activities, including music, drama and sport, promote pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development effectively. Arrangement for safeguarding meet statutory requirements. Leaders carry out detailed analyses of the performance of the different groups represented in the school to ensure equality of treatment and to tackle discrimination.

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.



20 June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Holy Cross Catholic Primary School, Leicester, LE2 6TY

Thank you for helping us when we visited your school recently. Special thanks to those pupils who filled in the inspection questionnaire or came to talk to us and share their views about the school. It was good to talk to you during lessons and see your work. We judged your school to be satisfactory, which means it is doing many things right but also has some areas to improve.

Here are some of the positive things we found out about your school.

- Most of you make good progress in the nursery, Reception and Years 1 and 2 classes.
- Most of you concentrate on your work in lessons and get on well with each other.
- You really enjoy learning through practical activities.
- You have done some interesting topic work, particularly about other countries and religions.

To improve your school further, I have asked those in charge to make sure that:

- teachers give you opportunities to solve practical mathematical problems in as many subjects as possible, and help you to discuss how you can go about solving them
- teachers always ask you searching questions in lessons, challenge all of you to achieve your best and keep you interested in your work, and tell you clearly how well you are doing and how you could do better
- all leaders check more thoroughly how well their plans are working for the school, and refine their checking skills so that they are able to judge better how teaching is helping your work in lessons and in your books.

All of you can also help by always concentrating on your work in lessons.

Yours sincerely

Krishan Sharma
Lead inspector

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