

St Cross Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	117483
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	379428
Inspection dates	12–13 July 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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	206
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anthony Holbourn
Headteacher	Kathryn Hall
Date of previous school inspection	12 February 2009
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Age group	4–11
Inspection date(s)	12–13 July 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Tusha Chakraborti

Additional Inspector

James McAtear

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 13 lessons taught by seven teachers. They heard pupils' reading, scrutinised pupils' work, visited assemblies and observed 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 development planning, safeguarding documentation, data on pupils' progress and development planning. Responses from questionnaires completed by 53 parents and carers were analysed, as well as those from 111 pupils and 26 staff.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized primary school. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic heritages and for those who speak English as an additional language are well-above average. The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below average. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. The school holds Healthy School status. It has the Activemark, Eco-School Silver and International School Foundation Level awards. The school has had a considerable turnover of staff, including that of senior leaders, since the previous inspection. It is now fully staffed.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. It provides a welcoming and harmonious environment where pupils enjoy learning and grow up as confident learners. The school is not yet outstanding because there is not enough outstanding teaching to ensure outstanding achievement for all groups of pupils and not all leaders yet have full impact on improving teaching and learning.
- Pupils' achievement is good. Attainment is above average by the end of Years 2 and 6. This reflects an improvement in the performance of pupils at the end of Year 6, after a dip in 2009 and 2010 when attainment was average. Achievement in Early Years Foundation Stage has improved since the last inspection and is now good.
- Teaching is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and often hold high expectations of pupils' learning. They motivate them well to learn through well-planned activities. Nonetheless, the tasks that pupils are given do not always provide enough challenge for more-able pupils. Consequently, pupils do not always achieve the standards of which they are capable.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Pupils display great enthusiasm for learning and thrive in an atmosphere of respect and dignity. Their positive attitudes to learning contribute well to their achievement, supported well by the school's highly inclusive ethos. Pupils have good understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe.
- Leadership and management are good. The headteacher, despite the considerable turnover in staffing, has sustained good teaching and management of performance leading to rising standards in Year 6 and the Early Years Foundation Stage. She has established a strong leadership team. Together, they are driving improvement and moving the school forward. Newly appointed senior 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

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understanding of the school's performance and offers effective challenge.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by:
 - ensuring that learning activities provide sufficient challenges for all pupils, especially the more able, so that all achieve as well as they can.
- Increase the capacity of leadership at all levels by consolidating the role of the recently appointed senior 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 Reception with skills just below those expected for their age. An attractive learning environment and careful monitoring of children's progress help them to make good progress and to achieve expected standards in all areas of learning by the time they move to Year 1. A range of well-resourced activities stimulate children's enjoyment of learning. This was seen in a session where children, following the reading of *Billy Goat Gruff*, enjoyed recounting the story and building bridges for Billy Goat using different materials.

Pupils' achievement is good reflected in their above-average attainment. Attainment in national tests at the end of Year 6 has risen to the above-average level, owing to the successful teamwork of the headteacher and staff in implementing a rigorous system for monitoring pupils' achievement. Progress has accelerated in Years 3 to 6 and pupils' reading and writing skills are now much improved through the development of extended writing and cross-curricular topic work. Attainment in reading is above average by the end of Year 2 and when pupils leave the school in Year 6. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs as well as pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress from the consistent and well-targeted support they receive from teachers and support staff. Most parents and carers who responded to the questionnaires are pleased with their children's education and rightly feel that their children achieve well.

Pupils develop a good 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. They engage in small-group and pair-work activities where they enthusiastically discuss their ideas before embarking on an extended piece of writing. For instance, in a literacy lesson Year 6 pupils planned their public speaking topic in small groups, using an appropriate range of vocabulary for making the speech effective and, monitoring each other's performance. Pupils use their computer skills well to support their learning in other subjects, such as using search engines and internet for investigative tasks in mathematics.

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Quality of teaching

Teaching is good. Most parents and carers rightly think that teaching is good and almost all pupils confirm this. In most lessons, teachers display good subject knowledge. Where teaching is good or better, 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, skilfully targeted questioning enabled pupils very effectively to engage in an investigative approach to planning a holiday, following certain criteria, such as the limitation of budget and destination. Pupils successfully used their understanding of problem solving and calculation skills to aid their learning in this task. Teachers make good use of technology and use the interactive whiteboards very effectively to share the purpose of lessons and to explain the success criteria. Consequently, pupils know what they are expected to learn and are able to evaluate their learning. Teachers plan well, usually matching work to the learning needs of all groups of pupils. Nevertheless, opportunities are occasionally missed to extend the skills and understanding of the more-able pupils through sufficiently challenging tasks. The teaching of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is good. Well-deployed teaching assistants provide effective support for all groups of pupils, especially for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.

In the Reception class, staff are particularly successful in creating a welcoming environment where children become confident in pursuing activities that match their own interests as well as those directed by adults. Regular teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) supports children well in rapidly developing their literacy skills.

Teachers promote pupils' understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues well. They engage pupils in group discussions in religious education and topic work on different countries of the world, raising their awareness of religious and cultural diversity. Reading is taught well throughout the school and guided reading sessions are used effectively to promote pupils' understanding of different genres.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The school successfully promotes pupils' safety, personal development and academic achievement through its caring ethos. An effective behaviour management system secures a well ordered and safe environment. Procedures for adults to manage pupils' behaviour are comprehensive and applied consistently. Most parents and carers who responded to the questionnaires stated that behaviour is good and all think that their children are safe at school at all times. Pupils confirm this and report that they get on well with learning without disruption. They state that incidents of bullying are very rare. 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.

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Pupils believe in a set of values and principles, based on the school's positive ethos which strongly influences their behaviour, relationships and attitudes to each other. They are courteous, cooperative and display very positive attitudes to learning. They listen to adults and to each other with respect. They fully respect the school's code of conduct and value the school's rewards and sanctions system.

Pupils 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.

Pupils take on roles of responsibility within the class, through their eco council work and fundraising activities to support national and international charities. Older pupils enjoy supporting the children from the Reception class. Children in the Reception class demonstrate positive behaviour and support each other well. This was evident in their cooperative group work in the outdoor activity session. Attendance is average, but is showing marked improvement.

Leadership and management

The school has a good capacity for sustained improvement, as illustrated by the rising achievement of pupils by the end of Year 6 and their positive attitudes to learning, despite high turnover of staff in recent years. The headteacher, supported by staff and the governing body, has now successfully established a senior leadership team. Newly appointed senior leaders, although sufficiently experienced, are at the early stage of developing their current roles to further improve the quality of teaching and learning.

The headteacher has ensured that a rigorous programme for the monitoring of teaching enhances the expertise of teachers and consistently increases pupils' achievement. This is supported well by an effective professional development and robust performance management programme. 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. 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 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. A good range of art and sporting activities, as well as trips to museums and local places of interest, enrich pupils' learning experience. The school offers French and Italian language classes before the school starts in the morning which contribute very well to pupils learning experiences and prepare them well for

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future education. These language classes are very popular and the participation rate is high. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through the curriculum. Assemblies and religious education 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.

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. All safeguarding requirements are met. The school has good partnerships with parents and carers, engaging them successfully in their children's learning. The governing body has a strong focus on involving parents and carers through their regular surveys and meetings.

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.



16 July 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Cross Catholic Primary School, Hoddesdon EN11 8BN

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. We found that 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 Eco-School representatives, responsibly. Thank you for the questionnaires that you filled in for the inspection and for sharing your views with us.

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

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
- ensure that teachers with responsibility develop more expertise to help you learn more effectively and take on greater responsibility for helping to improve your school.

You already make a good contribution to the life of your school. You can help it to improve even further by continuing to do your best at everything you do and behaving well.

Yours sincerely

Tusha Chakraborti
Lead inspector

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