

Holy Cross Church of England Primary School

Belmont Road, Uckfield, TN22 1BP

Inspection dates 23–24 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- There is not enough consistently good or outstanding teaching so that pupils do not achieve well over time.
- Pupils make uneven progress in English and mathematics as they move through the school.
- Some pupils lose concentration during lessons, especially where teaching is less effective, so that their progress slows.
- Pupils do not have a sufficiently clear understanding of different types of bullying and of how they can help to keep themselves safe.
- The role played by subject leaders in checking how well teaching is helping pupils to achieve is at an early stage.
- Plans to improve the school are not sharply focused enough to enable leaders to measure the success of developments and secure more rapid improvement.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has successfully steered the school through an unsettled period and staff and parents are positive about the school.
- The quality of teaching is improving so that there is a clearer focus on what pupils will learn during lessons.
- The Ark makes a significant contribution to the social and emotional well-being of those pupils who attend.
- Governors understand the school's strengths and what needs to be done to improve the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed nine lessons and part lessons, including two joint observations with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body, a local authority representative, senior leaders, staff and pupils.
- The inspector took account of 40 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- The inspector observed the school's work and analysed a range of documents and policies, including the school improvement plan, information about pupils' progress, attendance records, safeguarding documents and a sample of pupils' work.

Inspection team

Julie Sackett, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils in receipt of the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, pupils from service families and children in local authority care) is above the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- Pupils in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 are taught in classes of mixed ages.
- 'The Ark' is a nurture class and also provides enrichment activities for more able pupils. It is managed and run by the school and was included in this inspection.
- The current headteacher was appointed in September 2010.
- There is a privately run nursery on site which is not managed by the school, and will be inspected separately.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of teaching which is consistently good or outstanding to secure pupils' good achievement over time by making sure that teachers:
 - make full use of times during lessons when they talk to the whole class to check understanding and to enable pupils to learn from each other
 - provide opportunities for pupils of different abilities to be actively involved during sessions when the teacher is engaged in dialogue with the whole class
 - all expect pupils to present their work to a high standard
 - mark work regularly, including comments about what pupils have done well and how they can improve further.
- Improve the quality of behaviour by:
 - ensuring that teachers insist on high levels of attention and engagement during lessons, especially when the teacher is talking to the whole class, so that pupils are ready for learning and their progress is more rapid
 - developing pupils' understanding of different types of bullying, so that they have a better understanding of how they can help to keep themselves safe.
- Increase the pace of school improvement by:
 - sharpening the focus of planned developments so that the success of improvements in raising pupils' achievement can be more readily measured
 - strengthening the role of subject leaders in checking how well teaching is supporting pupils' achievement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils make uneven progress as they move through the school, and as a result their achievement over time is not good enough. Variations in the quality of teaching have resulted in some more-able pupils making good progress, but this is not always being sustained between different year groups.
- This inconsistency in overall progress is seen, for example, in a dip in attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2011, due in part to declining ability on entry to the school, but also to slower progress, and lower attainment, in Key Stage 1. Pupils make better progress in Key Stage 2, and attainment rose in 2012. Pupils are expected to achieve broadly average attainment by the end of Key Stage 2 this year.
- Groups of pupils, including disabled pupils, pupils with special educational needs, those from minority ethnic groups, and pupils who speak English as an additional language, make similar progress to their peers. Reception children start in school with skills and levels of understanding which vary from year to year but which, in recent years, have been below those expected for their age. Their progress is in line with their peers.
- Inspection evidence, including the school's records of pupils' progress, observations of lessons and work scrutinies, shows that pupils' progress is accelerating, as recent improvements in teaching begin to have a positive effect on pupils' achievement.
- Pupils who are subject to pupil premium funding typically make the same progress as their peers. However, records show that this group is beginning to make better progress because funds are used to provide support which is more closely matched to pupils' needs, such as by holding small-group phonics sessions and providing support for individual pupils. As a result, the gap between the achievement of these pupils and other pupils nationally, narrowed in 2012. Average point scores for these pupils matched those attained by other pupils in the school in 2012, and were broadly similar to the national average.
- The link between letters and sounds (phonics) is taught daily in Key Stage 1 and taught in accordance with pupils' individual needs in Key Stage 2. For example, in 2012 support was provided in the form of focused group work for a number of pupils in Year 1 who spoke English as an additional language. As a result, these pupils made good progress.
- Information from the results of the phonics screening check for Year 1 in 2012 was used to plan future phonics teaching. Attainment in reading was above average at the end of Year 6.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because there is not enough teaching over time which is consistently good or better, leading to variable achievement.
- In some instances, teachers restrict their questioning to particular groups of pupils and do not always insist that all pupils pay attention and listen. As a result, opportunities are missed for some pupils to demonstrate their understanding and to learn from watching how others have completed tasks.
- Good quality questioning was seen in a Reception lesson, where children made good progress in developing their numerical understanding, using a mathematics system that helps them to recognise numbers through using patterns and shapes. However, typically, when talking to the whole class, teachers do not always use sessions well enough to check pupils' understanding and to give them the chance to learn from each other.
- There are variations in the quality of marking. While some books are regularly marked, with teachers' written comments to guide pupils on how they can improve their work, this is not consistent across the school, so that it is not always clear what pupils have done well and what they need to do next.
- Teachers do not always expect pupils to do their best in their work books so that there are

differences in the quality of pupils' work, and their progress is consequently not as rapid as it could be.

- Training and support for teachers and teaching assistants have resulted in improvements in some aspects of teaching. For example, in most lessons teachers ensure that pupils understand the aims of the lesson and what they need to do to be successful, and this information is revisited at different times during the lesson so that pupils remain focused.
- Disabled pupils and pupils with special educational needs make good progress where teachers' activities are matched well to their individual needs, and where pupils are given appropriate materials to help them to complete the work.
- The Ark plays a key and much-valued role in supporting pupils with emotional and behavioural needs. While this is a relatively recent initiative, records show that a number of pupils who attend The Ark have made significant progress in their social and emotional development and, as a result, their achievement has improved.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- Pupils' behaviour requires improvement because it is not consistently good enough. Some adults' expectations of pupils' behaviour are not always sufficiently high or clear, so that pupils sometimes receive mixed messages about what sort of behaviour is acceptable, particularly during lessons. On these occasions, and where teaching is less effective, some pupils become unsettled, lose concentration, and their progress slows. Pupils who spoke with the inspector said that sometimes their learning was interrupted by too much noise.
- During the inspection, pupils were polite and keen to talk to visitors. Pupils behave well during playtimes and when moving around the school. Older pupils make a valuable contribution to playtimes in their role as 'playground buddies' because they are caring towards younger pupils and help them to play games properly.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are good. Pupils with specific emotional and behavioural needs are well supported by calm, positive and knowledgeable staff, including those who work with pupils in The Ark.
- Pupils told the inspector that they feel safe in school, and most parents agree. For example, pupils know what bullying is and are confident that adults in school successfully sort out any concerns. However, pupils are less clear about different forms of bullying, such as verbal-bullying and cyber-bullying, and are unsure about what they can do to help to keep themselves safe.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The leadership and management of the school require improvement because actions to improve the quality of teaching have not yet been successful in securing consistently good teaching across the school.
 - While some aspects of teaching have improved and an element of weak teaching has been eradicated, improvements have not yet been sufficient to improve pupils' achievement. However, inspection evidence shows that aspects of teaching are improving, and that the progress made by some groups of pupils, such as those known to be eligible to receive free school meals, is beginning to accelerate. This demonstrates the school's capacity to improve.
 - Systems are in place to check how well pupils are doing, including regular meetings for teachers and leaders to discuss pupils' progress. As a result, teachers are more accountable for pupils' progress and there is a clearer focus on what pupils need to do to improve.
 - Procedures to check the quality of teaching, including lesson observations, are used appropriately to identify strengths in teaching and to provide support, including whole staff
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training. Regular meetings to review pupils' progress are linked with performance management and this has led to improvements in some aspects of teaching.

- Subject leaders are enthusiastic and demonstrate confident subject knowledge. However, their role in checking the quality of subject teaching is at an early stage, so that their contribution to improving the overall quality of teaching has been limited so far.
- Leaders know the school's strengths and understand what needs to be done to secure further improvement. Development plans concentrate appropriately on actions to improve teaching and pupils' achievement, although targets are not quite sharp enough to enable leaders to measure fully how well developments are improving pupils' achievement.
- The school is committed to helping all pupils to do their best, regardless of ability or background, and discrimination is not tolerated.
- Pupil premium funding has been used to support pupils known to be eligible through initiatives such as one-to-one tuition, additional tuition provided by The Ark, and involvement in an arts project which successfully developed pupils' confidence and self-esteem. The school regularly checks how well these pupils are achieving compared with other pupils in the school.
- The headteacher has maintained determination and drive during a period of uncertainty for the school and a number of staff changes. Most parents express confidence in the leadership of the school, staff morale is good, and the number of pupils on roll is increasing.
- The local authority provides the school's leadership with support to secure further improvement. For example, a review of behaviour was completed and successfully contributed to school planning and development to improve behaviour.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and organised appropriately to meet pupils' needs. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a secure knowledge of pupils' achievement and how this compares with pupils' achievement nationally. They know how pupil premium funding is used, and the impact that this is having on pupils' achievement. Through regular visits they have a good day-to-day knowledge of the school, and are aware of how standards of teaching are improving. Through attending a range of training, including performance management of staff and safeguarding, they understand how appraisal procedures are used to support and reward staff appropriately, and keep a firm overview of safeguarding.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	114562
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	401449

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	126
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gerald Baker
Headteacher	Justin Heath
Date of previous school inspection	9 December 2009
Telephone number	01825 762336
Fax number	01825 769423
Email address	head@holycross.e-sussex.sch.uk

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