

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School

Laburnum Drive, Walmley, Sutton Coldfield, B76 2SP

Inspection dates 24–25 April 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Whatever their background, age or ability pupils enjoy school and learn well in lessons. Pupils make good progress and do well in the national tests at the end of Years 2 and 6.
- The extra funding provided by the pupil premium is used well to make sure eligible pupils keep up with their classmates.
- Pupils play together well. They understand and follow the school rules without fuss and know how to keep themselves safe. Pupils listen attentively in class, follow instructions well and usually settle quickly to work.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is promoted well through a range of subjects and visits to places of interest.
- The headteacher makes appropriate checks on the quality of teaching and learning in English and mathematics and sets targets for improvement. Teachers know what is expected of them. They benefit from good professional training to improve their skills consequently, teaching is usually good and standards are rising.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There are few opportunities for pupils to work on more complex mathematical problems that involve logic or more than one way of solving a puzzle.
- Pupils do not get enough time to write long and varied pieces of work nor do they use their best handwriting or keep their work neat.
- Teachers' marking does not consistently give enough information to pupils about what they need to do to improve their work further.
- The headteacher and governors do not make sure that all policies and procedures are based on the most up-to-date guidance.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in all year groups in 12 lessons and also made a series of short visits to classrooms and other activities such as withdrawal groups. The headteacher joined the inspectors on a number of these lessons and activities.
- Meetings were held with those teachers with extra responsibilities for subjects such as mathematics and English, the Chair of the Governing Body, pupils and representatives of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of the responses from the school's own parental survey and 39 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- The inspectors looked at a range of school documentation and information relating to teaching and learning, behaviour and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Jacqueline Wordsworth, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Vicky Parsey

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is an average-sized primary school.
- Almost all pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional government funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those who are looked after by the local authority and pupils with a parent in the armed forces, is well below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is similar to that found nationally, as is that for those supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- No pupils are taught in alternative provision away from the school site.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Sharpen the effectiveness of leadership and management so that they are outstanding by:
 - ensuring that governors collect more first-hand information so they are able to question leaders further about the school's performance
 - making sure policies are followed and are kept up-to-date.
 - more regularly checking the quality of pupils' learning and the quality of teaching in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Raise achievement in all year groups so that it is outstanding in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - providing opportunities for pupils to solve more complex mathematical problems and investigations, particularly for the most able pupils
 - making sure that teachers emphasise the importance of good handwriting, insist that grammar, punctuation and spelling are always accurate and develop pupils' understanding of more complex writing skills.
 - making sure that the marking of pupils' work provides clear guidance on what makes a good piece of work and providing time for pupils to respond to and act on any suggestions for improvement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' skills and abilities when they enter Reception are in line or slightly above those typically expected for other four-year olds nationally. They make good progress in their early reading and writing skills. They build well on their already well-developed social skills. This good progress is sustained across Key Stages 1 and 2.
- When pupils leave school at the end of Year 6, including those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, they are generally a year ahead of other pupils nationally in English and mathematics. All pupils make the progress expected of them with most doing better than this.
- The very small number of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium make good progress and are in line with other pupils in the school in both English and mathematics. This is because funding is wisely spent on helping these pupils through one-to-one, in-class support and other small group activities.
- Pupils who find learning difficult or those who are disabled or have special educational needs make good progress. Sensitive, well organised support at the right level from teachers and other adults enables these pupils to gain in confidence and tackle more difficult work.
- Pupils read well. Strong emphasis given to the continued development of skills in phonics (the sounds that letters make) reaps rewards as any gaps in early reading skills are successfully plugged. As pupils continue through school their reading develops well. They learn to use their phonic knowledge to tackle unfamiliar words and they learn to read to the punctuation successfully so that stories come to life, especially when reading aloud.
- Older pupils say they enjoy reading and leave school as confident readers. They are able to express their views and opinions on a writer's choice of words. Pupils are particularly good at explaining what they like about a book and identifying the main themes.
- Pupils have good mathematical skills. They carry out mental and written calculations well. They count and subtract accurately. However, they do not solve problems on their own confidently on a regular basis, particularly mathematical problems that involve aspects other than number, such as logic problems or complex puzzles involving several steps and different types of calculations. This prevents the most able mathematicians from reaching Level 6.
- Pupils practise key features of writing, including punctuation and spelling and aspects of grammar and reach above average standards. They do not get the opportunity to use more complex styles of writing and teachers do not insist all punctuation, grammar and handwriting is accurate. Therefore the most able writers are not given the skills to be able to attain Level 6 or demonstrate the most advanced writing skills.
- Pupils' strong personal development underpins their good achievement because staff broaden their experiences by providing a range of opportunities.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers have good knowledge of areas of learning and subjects that they teach. They value the opportunity to participate in good quality training, including visiting schools in Europe, to

improve their skills.

- Teaching and learning is carefully structured so that almost all pupils make good progress. Teachers encourage and enthuse pupils so that they confidently contribute their ideas during discussions. Pupils are helped to persevere with tasks, help one another, and listen to different viewpoints.
- Teachers use questions well to check what pupils already know, although they are less successful in asking questions which challenge pupils to extend their thinking and quicken their progress in lessons, particularly for the most able writers and mathematicians.
- Small-group teaching for pupils who have special educational needs makes sure that pupils get the support they need to make good progress and improve their skills in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers use reading sessions well to develop pupils' wider reading skills. Groups working closely with the teacher or another adult are well led and help pupils to read both for enjoyment and meaning. Pupils are exposed to good quality books but opportunities are missed to make sure that the richness of language is transferred to their own writing.
- Different teachers mark work in different ways. Pupils are not always given the opportunity to act upon the marking and advice they receive from teachers about their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well, cooperate and support each other.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They know how to keep themselves safe on the internet and willingly take care of each other through the school's mentoring and buddy schemes. They are well informed about some, but not all, aspects of bullying and how to deal with any potential incidents should they occur.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual moral, social and cultural development is an important strength, with pupils acquiring a wide range of social skills that help them to develop into well-rounded individuals. All staff cultivate mutual respect and cooperation and promote pupils' confidence and self-esteem effectively.
- Pupils sing well in assemblies and adopt a reflective and contemplative approach during prayer.
- The school responds quickly to absence and as a result attendance is above average.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher checks on the quality of teachers' work regularly and teachers know what they have to work on to improve, although follow-up visits are not made quickly or often enough. Planned observations of complete lessons are routine in English and mathematics but not enough use is made of shorter sessions across the full range of subjects or to check on a particular aspect of teaching or learning.
- Senior leaders make sure that discrimination is tackled and that all pupils have an equal opportunity to do well.

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have developed good systems to keep a check on pupils' learning and progress. Regular meetings between teachers and members of the senior leadership team to discuss pupils' progress and identify suitable support and help have been successful, particularly for those pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Richness is added to school life for very many pupils by the after-school activities. The after-school drama club has been a long-standing part of the school's life and there is a wide range of clubs that many pupils enjoy.
- Pupils from across the school perform in the school's annual Shakespeare Festival; this year's performance is Hamlet and pupils will be preparing to perform to a large audience at the Birmingham Old Repertory Theatre. Past performances include Macbeth and Julius Caesar. This is a real opportunity for pupils to gain a good understanding of such classic literature and richness of language.
- The local authority has provided light-touch support for this good school.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governance is good. Governors make some visits to the school to check on aspects of the school's work but these are not always formally recorded. The governing body questions the headteacher carefully on the performance of teachers, especially when making decisions about any increases in teachers' pay. They know that teaching is good in the school and understand what needs to improve for teaching to become outstanding. Governors make sure that their finances and the additional funding received from the government are spent wisely. They know how well pupils are making progress and compare this to similar schools nationally through the headteacher's reports and analysis of pupils' performance. Safeguarding requirements in relation to child protection and the checking the suitability of staff prior to appointment meet current requirements. Governors ensure that pupils are kept safe on a day-to-day basis but they do not check often enough that policies and procedures include the most up-to-date guidance. Governors have not set or published an 'equality objective'.

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	103474
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	422038

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	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tony McGuigan
Headteacher	Jackie Deasy
Date of previous school inspection	23 November 2010
Telephone number	0121 6752158
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