

Holy Cross CofE VA Primary School

Ruth Street, Oldham, Greater Manchester, OL1 3EZ

Inspection dates 17–18 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
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

- Since the previous inspection, pupils' achievement, particularly in Key Stage 1, has not been as good as it should have been.
- The challenge for the most-able pupils does not always enable them to reach the standards of which they are capable.
- Pupils' progress and attainment in writing lag behind their performance in reading and mathematics. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to reinforce their writing skills across the curriculum and also to rehearse their ideas before they begin their writing assignments.
- The quality of teaching and learning is inconsistent across the school
- The sharing of the good and exemplary practice in teaching which already exists is not fully embedded across the school.
- The coaching of teachers to improve their classroom practice is not on a formal enough basis.
- The leadership skills of the relatively new extended leadership team are not yet fully developed.
- New members of the governing body have not yet received the relevant governor training.

The school has the following strengths

- The talented and committed headteacher and deputy headteacher have introduced a range of strategies which are bringing about improvements in teaching and in pupils' achievement. For example, pupils' achievement in reading is now good. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs also make good progress.
- Pupils behave well. They feel safe and very well supported by all adults.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted outstandingly well.
- Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is improving and children make good progress in the Nursery.
- Pupils from Bangladeshi backgrounds achieved well in 2013.
- Although some governors are relatively new, the governing body as a whole has a good understanding of school performance.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 28 part-lessons. They also observed the school carol concert, including the parents' coffee morning. In addition, they listened to pupils in Year 2, Year 4 and Year 6 read.
- Inspectors spoke to two groups of pupils, including members of the school council. They met with three members of the governing body, including the Chair, the School Improvement Partner and a representative of the local authority. They also had discussions with the special educational needs co-ordinator, the pastoral leader, and members of the senior and extended leadership teams, including subject, aspect and phase co-ordinators.
- There were not enough responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) to enable the team to access parents' views. However, inspectors spoke informally with parents at the end of the first day of the inspection and also during the coffee morning on day two. They also considered the views expressed by 60 parents in the internal school questionnaire.
- Inspectors observed the school at work and looked at internal and external pupil progress and attainment data, pupils' books in lessons, school development planning and the school's strategies to enable it to gain an accurate view of its own performance. In addition, they considered a range of documentation in relation to safeguarding, child protection, behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Jim Kidd, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Peter Allen

Additional Inspector

Bimla Kumari

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a much larger-than-average sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is well above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above that usually found.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those from service families and those looked after by the local authority) is high.
- Over 70% of pupils are from minority ethnic heritages, mainly Bangladeshi heritage. Two thirds of the pupil population has English as an additional language.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school holds enhanced Healthy School status and is also a UNICEF Rights Respecting School. It also holds the Platinum Tooth Friendly award and is an active member of the Children's University. The school runs a youth club two evenings per week.
- There have been several staffing changes since the previous inspection, including the appointment of a new headteacher.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching to raise pupils' progress and attainment, particularly in Key Stage 1, by:
 - embedding across the school the sharing of the good and exemplary classroom practice which already exists
 - putting coaching arrangements to develop teachers' classroom practice on a more formal footing
 - ensuring that the work and activities for the most-able pupils are sufficiently challenging, to enable them to reach the standards of which they are capable.
- Raise pupils' progress and attainment in writing by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to practise extended and structured writing across the curriculum
 - giving pupils more opportunities to discuss and rehearse their ideas before they put pen to paper.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that all new members of the governing body receive appropriate training
 - further developing the leadership skills of the recently-established extended leadership team.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because, since the previous inspection, pupils have not made good or better progress in their studies, particularly in Key Stage 1 and especially in writing.
- Attainment at the end of Year 2 has been well below average over time. Nonetheless it improved in 2013 and was below average. Most make the progress expected from their starting points.
- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge which are significantly below those expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy and in personal, social and emotional development. They make good progress in the Nursery but, because children's work in the Reception classes is not displayed prominently enough and because the areas do not emphasise language as strongly as they could, progress slows a little during this year. They leave Reception and enter Year 1 with below average levels of attainment.
- Progress varies across the rest of the school but is good in Year 6, and pupils leave for high school with attainment which is now close to the national average. Attainment in writing is improving but lags behind that in mathematics and most certainly in reading.
- Achievement in mathematics is improving steadily and teachers are setting more challenging work for pupils. In 2013 an above-average proportion of pupils made more-than-expected progress in this subject.
- Pupils enjoy reading and achievement is good in both key stages. Attainment is close to average and results in 2013 were better than ever before. Teaching of reading is stronger than other subjects. In Key Stage 1 pupils make good use of their letters and sounds to tackle new words. Older pupils read with accuracy, expression and enthusiasm.
- As a result of strong bilingual support, pupils of Bangladeshi heritage make good progress. Although improving and not inadequate, White British pupils do not achieve as well as others.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are supported well by senior leaders, teachers and teaching assistants. As a result, they continue to make good progress in their studies. The most-able pupils do not always reach the standards of which they are capable and insufficient numbers reach the higher National Curriculum Level 5.
- The school uses pupil premium funding wisely, to promote the personal, emotional and academic development of looked-after pupils and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. Strong one-to-one tuition and opportunities for them to engage in learning experiences outside school lead to them making at least the same progress as their peers do and on occasion, better progress. In 2013, for example, pupils supported by the funding made better progress than others in reading and mathematics and reached broadly average standards in both subjects.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent across the school and, over time, has not been good enough overall to enable pupils to make good or better progress. Nonetheless, closer and more regular monitoring of classroom practice is having a positive impact and teaching is improving steadily. During the inspection, no inadequate teaching was observed and outstanding teaching was seen in Year 6.
- Leaders recognise, however, that the sharing of good and excellent examples of teaching across the school is not fully embedded and that the coaching of staff to help them improve their classroom practice is not on as formal a footing as it could be.
- Warm relationships between pupils and between pupils and the adults who work with them are the hallmarks of most lessons. Teachers and teaching assistants want their pupils to succeed

and individual support in lessons is usually good and sometimes better.

- Pupils' progress is fastest when teaching encourages pupils to do their best, to acquire new knowledge and skills, and to apply existing skills in meaningful ways. In a Year 6 history lesson, for example, in which teaching was judged outstanding, pupils researched a variety of historical topics such as the Great Fire of London, and they identified a range of historical skills they needed to use if they were to make an accurate assessment of what happened. They also recognised that their mathematical skills were important if they were to place events in the correct chronological order.
- In this lesson, too, there was a consideration of other skills which were needed if pupils were to produce writing of a good and better standard. Pupils identified the inclusion of subordinate clauses, different kinds of connectives and also the use of powerful adjectives and adverbs. Too often, however, pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to practise their writing skills in subjects other than English.
- When challenge in the classroom is realistic, pupils rise to it and make good and sometimes better progress in their studies. Where activities and challenge are not high enough, particularly for the most-able, pupils do not reach the levels of attainment their ability warrants.
- Marking is generally good and comments often thank pupils for their efforts and give them detailed advice on how they can improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are very proud of their school and feel safe within its walls because, in their words, 'Teachers teach us to be good to others. All the grown-ups, the dinner ladies too, keep an eye on us and make sure we are safe.'
- Parents spoken to and those who returned the school questionnaire agree with these views, believe their children are safe and happy, and say, 'The school is a second home to us all.'
- Pupils behave well and often outstandingly well in lessons and around school. They are courteous to each other, to staff and to visitors. They display good attitudes to learning and any lapses in behaviour in class are dealt with swiftly and effectively.
- Pupils have a good awareness of the many different forms bullying can take, including cyber-bullying and that based on prejudice. They say that bullying is rare and that it is dealt with quickly when it occurs. They make particular testament to the headteacher who, they say, 'Is a great leader, who cares for and respects all of us and who stops any bullying immediately.'
- The school also ensures that pupils understand how to use the Internet safely and that they know why social media sites can be dangerous.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development outstandingly well. Each classroom has a 'spirituality corner', where pupils can express their views about how they should live their lives and where pupils at risk of misbehaving can reflect on how they should conduct themselves.
- Pupils value the wide range of responsibilities they have, as sports leaders, librarians, and members of the school council, for example. Older pupils comment, 'Everyone should be a good role model to everyone else.'
- The school is a racially harmonious community and pupils have many opportunities to learn about and celebrate cultures and religions which are different from their own. They value the links they have with schools in Bangladesh and Uganda.
- Cultural events, musical and drama productions for example, are a key element of school life. The singing of the choir during the carol concert was a joy to hear.
- Attendance continues to improve and is now broadly average.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The new headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, knows the school well and

has established a range of strategies, more emphasis on reading for example, to enable the school to improve. His clear vision for improvement and high ambitions for how the school can develop are shared by all staff, who comment, 'We love working here. Senior leaders respect and value us all.'

- However, leadership and management require improvement because, over time, teaching has not been effective enough to ensure that pupils, particularly in Key Stage 1, have made good or even better progress overall. In addition, attainment in writing is still not as good as it should be and the most-able pupils are not always reaching the standards of which they are capable.
- Members of the extended leadership team are relatively new in post. Although they lead by example and are proactive in supporting and improving the subjects and aspects for which they are particularly responsible, their leadership skills are not yet fully developed. The most-able pupils are not identified quickly enough and coaching arrangements are still a little ad hoc and do not always lead to weaker aspects of teaching being addressed effectively.
- Staff believe that performance appraisal arrangements are rigorous but fair and say that there is an overriding emphasis on them reaching their pupil progress targets.
- The curriculum meets the needs of pupils well overall, but there are always not enough opportunities for them to practise and reinforce their writing skills in subjects other than literacy. There is a wide range of after-school clubs and extra-curricular activities and the school's enrichment officer, employed through pupil premium funding, arranges a variety of out-of-school learning experiences which pupils would not normally have.
- Primary School Sports Funding is used well. The school employs a full-time physical education (PE) leader who takes PE lessons during school and runs after-school games sessions. He also works alongside other staff and helps to develop sports leaders in Key Stage 2 and also promotes sustainable partnerships with the local community and with sports clubs in the area.
- The welfare of each individual pupil is at the heart of everything the school tries to do. As a result, child protection and safeguarding policies and practice fully meet requirements. The school rejects all forms of discrimination and promotes equality of opportunity soundly. In the words of one member of the school council, 'There is no racism here!'
- The local authority continues to support the school well, particularly in relation to leadership development and in how the school can judge performance in all areas of its life with the utmost accuracy.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Although some members of the governing body are new and have not yet received training, the more established governors have a good awareness of the school's strengths and areas for development. They interrogate data accurately and ask searching questions of the school's leadership about trends in the achievement of different groups and in different subjects.
- Individual governors are linked to classes and they visit the school on a regular basis, on occasion to deliver whole-school assemblies. They understand how the school is attempting to improve the quality of teaching and the finance committee holds rigorous discussions about performance appraisal arrangements, ensuring that staff do not receive financial reward if they do not meet their classroom targets for pupil progress.
- Governors are actively involved in discussions about how best to use pupil premium funding and they keep a close eye on the impact of this funding on the achievement of pupils looked after by the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals.

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	135720
Local authority	Oldham
Inspection number	433170

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	461
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Marlene Armitage
Headteacher	Paul Wardle
Date of previous school inspection	14 December 2010
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