

# Waltham Holy Cross Junior School

Quendon Drive, Waltham Abbey, EN9 1LG

## Inspection dates

9–10 January 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Inadequate</b>	<b>4</b>
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires special measures.

- Leaders and governors have not been able to bring about lasting improvements to the effectiveness of teaching and pupils' attainment since the last inspection.
- Standards reached by pupils at the end of Year 6 have been too low for three years and the progress they make during their time at the school is well below average.
- Pupils' progress is inconsistent between classes and year groups because of the wide variation in the quality of teaching.
- The progress of pupils for whom the school receives additional funding is too uneven.
- Pupils' spelling is often poor and key reading skills are not well developed.
- Pupils feel safe in school. Their behaviour requires improvement because, though pupils know how to behave and do so for most of the time, attitudes to learning sometimes slip when teaching is inadequate.
- In mathematics, pupils do not get enough opportunities to use their knowledge and skills for things they might do in everyday life.
- The work pupils are given is often not challenging enough, particularly for the more-able pupils.
- The plans leaders have to improve the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics are unclear and are not working well enough or fast enough to improve teaching and learning.

### The school has the following strengths

- Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress because of the effective teaching they receive in groups or individually.
- The headteacher has an accurate picture of what the school needs to do to improve as does the recently reconstituted governing body.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 26 lessons, two of which were seen together with the headteacher. Twelve teachers and their teaching assistants were seen working with pupils.
- Inspectors attended a whole-school assembly.
- Inspectors looked at work in pupils' books and on classroom displays. They listened to children from all year groups reading.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils and talked to pupils during lessons, in the playground and as they moved around the school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, subject leaders and governors. Inspectors also gathered views from a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 39 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and spoke informally with parents and carers at the start of the day.
- Questionnaires completed by 23 members of staff were taken into account.
- A wide range of school documents were reviewed. These included development plans, policies, the school's own judgement of its strengths and weaknesses, various monitoring, safeguarding and planning records, information provided for families, and governing body documents.

## Inspection team

Ruth Dollner, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
David Westall	Additional Inspector
Simon Hughes	Additional Inspector

## Full report

*In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.*

### Information about this school

- Waltham Holy Cross Junior School is a larger than average-sized school.
- A large majority of the pupils are from a White British background. A small minority of pupils come from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds and a small group of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium has increased over recent years and is average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those in local authority care, and pupils with a parent in the armed forces.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Following a period of turmoil since the last inspection, the governing body has very recently been reconstituted. After having requested an external review of governance, the governing body is now supported by a strategic group which includes representatives of the local authority.
- Two teachers joined the school in September 2013.
- The school runs its own breakfast and after-school clubs.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is at least good by ensuring that all teachers:
  - learn from the good and outstanding teaching which exists in the school and take steps to improve their own practice
  - develop their questioning skills to probe pupils' understanding more effectively and deepen pupils' knowledge and thinking
  - develop the quality of their exposition in mathematics and English lessons, and model more effectively the skills that they are teaching
  - develop the marking system so that it is consistently used in all classes
  - adopt a programme for the consistent teaching of spelling across the school.
- Accelerate the rates of pupils' progress in all classes so that standards rise to the levels of which pupils are capable by:
  - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can and should achieve
  - giving pupils of different abilities tasks which challenge them, and allowing them enough time to practise what they have been taught
  - giving pupils opportunities to use their mathematical skills in real-life situations
  - developing pupils' ability to write at length and to improve their understanding of grammar,

punctuation and spelling.

■ Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:

- leaders at all levels accurately identify the most important actions that are needed to bring about improvements in teaching, and that they make sure the improvements are happening
- the headteacher tackles poor leadership swiftly and holds leaders to account for pupils' progress
- subject leaders develop the skills to support teachers to improve and are given the time to do so
- weak teaching is challenged and that teachers know exactly what needs to improve, within short timescales
- the newly re-constituted governing body receives appropriate training and help from the local authority to implement the recommendations from the recent external review of governance, so that it challenges and supports the work of the school effectively.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and governance may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### is inadequate

- Pupils' attainment has been below national averages for the last three years. Standards in writing and mathematics are below average when pupils leave the school and this means that pupils are not well prepared for the next stage of education. Too few pupils reach the higher levels, even though they have the ability to do so. Achievement in English and mathematics is inadequate.
- When pupils join the school in Year 3, their attainment is above average. Their attainment at the end of Year 6 shows that they have lost ground, as they leave the school achieving standards which are below average.
- Pupils' progress throughout the school is uneven, with pupils doing less well in some classes and in some subjects than in others. In some classes, pupils' skills in reading, writing and mathematics are just below average while in other classes, including parallel classes in the same year group, they do much less well and their skills are well below average.
- The most-able pupils do not do as well as similar pupils nationally by the end of Year 6. Progress of the most-able pupils across the school is variable, with too many making little or no progress in the weakest lessons.
- Pupils who are eligible for support from the pupil premium funding made progress which was much less than seen nationally in 2013. Since September 2013, some effective support has been put in place for these pupils and many of them are making good or better progress. However, this is inconsistent and too many of these pupils are making little or no progress in reading, writing or mathematics. In 2013, eligible pupils in Year 6 were the equivalent of around six months behind their classmates in reading and mathematics. They were four terms behind them in writing.
- The few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language achieve a little better than their classmates. In the past, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs made below-average progress. However, since September 2013, most of these pupils have been making good progress because of the effective teaching they are receiving in groups and individually.
- Achievement in mathematics is restricted by weaknesses in what is taught. Pupils have too little opportunity, for example, to use their knowledge and practise their numeracy skills by applying them to real-life situations.
- In writing, pupils' skills in using grammar, punctuation and spelling require improvement and there is inconsistency across the school in children's ability to write at length.
- Lower-attaining pupils are not using their knowledge of letters and sounds automatically when they come up against difficulties in their reading, and more-able readers are not developing deeper understanding of the books they read.
- The primary school sports' funding has been used to employ sports coaches and to buy equipment, and this is giving pupils the opportunity to experience a variety of new sports, supporting them in developing healthy lifestyles and improving their physical well-being.

**The quality of teaching****is inadequate**

- During the inspection, the majority of the lessons seen either required improvement or were inadequate. Evidence from work in pupils' books, from recent monitoring of teaching by the headteacher and discussions with learners, show that there has been too much variation in the quality of teaching over time, with too much that is weak.
- Some teaching has improved recently because teachers are following agreed approaches to marking and planning for the needs of all ability groups. However, these approaches are not yet firmly established in all classes.
- Too often, not all pupils in a class are given work that stretches them. This leads to little or no progress in these lessons.
- Teachers are too often preoccupied with the pace of lessons, but this often means that they race through activities and do not give pupils enough time to think or practise using the knowledge and skills they acquire. This leads to confusion and slows the amount of learning.
- There are too few opportunities for children to see the teacher use their knowledge and demonstrate the skills needed for writing and for mathematics. In some weaker lessons, teachers provide only very short explanations and pupils are unclear what is expected of them.
- Teachers' subject knowledge of English and mathematics is not always secure and this leads to confusion and misconceptions in some lessons. Spelling is tested throughout the school, but there is no consistent or systematic approach to teaching it. This is reflected in the poor spelling seen in many pupils' books.
- When teaching assistants are deployed effectively to support pupils in their learning, pupils make good and sometimes better progress. Progress is slower where teaching assistants are not given enough guidance from teachers on what to expect the pupils to achieve.
- Teachers or teaching assistants lead small-group sessions for pupils with specific learning needs, or to help others catch up. These are effective and lead to good progress for these pupils. For example, a small group of Year 5 pupils were seen working on tasks to support their deeper understanding of the books they were reading. All were making good progress within the lesson and their books showed they had made excellent progress since September.
- In whole-class lessons, learning was most effective where teachers' explanations were clear, and probing questions were used to ensure pupils understood, to deepen their knowledge and secure good progress. For example, in a Year 6 English lesson, pupils of all ability levels were able to write at length on the theme of 'The lost thing'. Questions were carefully crafted and pupils were challenged to 'engage the reader'.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils****requires improvement**

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. In many lessons, pupils work hard, are attentive and respond quickly to teachers. However, in too many lessons, behaviour deteriorates as pupils lose focus and interest, and start to distract one another. As a result, they make too little progress in these lessons.
- Behaviour is good in the playground and around the school, although it can sometimes be boisterous in the lunch hall. Pupils are welcoming and happy to talk to visitors about their

learning.

- The school's work to keep children safe and secure is good. Pupils who spoke to inspectors talked sensibly about keeping themselves safe. They believe adults take good care of them and feel confident to talk to staff if they have problems.
- Attendance is average and improving. The headteacher has worked to improve punctuality so that lateness has been significantly reduced.
- The 'Kids' Cabin' before- and after-school clubs provide a secure and happy environment for the pupils and they enjoy being there.

### **The leadership and management are inadequate**

- Leadership and management are inadequate because leaders, including governors, have not taken effective steps to bring about improvements since the last inspection. The headteacher has a clear and accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, since the last inspection, poor subject leadership has been left unchallenged, until recently, and this has led to inadequate teaching and inadequate achievement.
- There has been little involvement with the school from the local authority until this academic year, when a standards and excellence commissioner, who is a headteacher at another local school, was deployed to work at the school. The headteacher took decisive action to secure a review of the school by external consultants together with the standards and excellence commissioner. This has triggered some improvements in teaching and learning in a short space of time, but the school does not have the capacity to improve further without external help.
- Leadership of English and mathematics is inadequate. Leaders have not demonstrated enough urgency to raise attainment or to eradicate inadequate teaching. Overall targets for improvement are accurate, but plans to raise attainment in English and mathematics are too general, with not enough clarity about what teachers need to do to improve teaching and raise attainment in these subjects.
- The leadership and management of teaching are inadequate because, though leaders are able accurately to spot weaknesses in teaching, they do not have the skills to remedy them. The good and outstanding teaching which exists in the school is not shared effectively.
- The school should not appoint newly qualified teachers.
- Most of the parents spoken to during the inspection value the work of the school. A very few parents are concerned that bullying is not dealt with effectively. School documentation shows that the rare instances of reported bullying are dealt with well. However, over half of the parents who completed the online Parent View survey said they would not recommend the school to another parent.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.
- The curriculum is inadequate because its delivery through the poor quality of teaching impedes the pupils' progress and does not promote a strong culture of good behaviour across the school. Some activities, such as specific 'theme' weeks, provide stimulating and interesting activities for pupils and promote pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development effectively. Pupils enjoy visits out of school and working with visitors who come to the school, such as the 'wizard

story group' which took place during the inspection.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body has not been effective in driving improvements, including in addressing the issues from the last inspection, or in holding the school to account for pupils' achievement. Governors have not ensured that the school provides value for money, including in its use of the pupil premium funding.
- The governing body was reconstituted in November 2013 after the Chair and several other governors left. A highly committed and informed Acting Chair has been appointed and new, experienced governors have joined the governing body. An external review of the governing body has taken place. This resulted in governors volunteering to enter into a strategic group with local authority representatives.
- The governing body has not met since it was reconstituted and it has not had the opportunity to act on the recommendations of the external review. Nevertheless, governors have an accurate picture of the quality of teaching in the school and understand the implications of the school's performance data. They are clear about how the new pay policy supports the work of the school in rewarding good teaching and tackling underperformance. They recognise that they need further training to begin to challenge the school's work effectively.



## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	114916
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	425222

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	333
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Darrell Palmer (Acting Chair)
<b>Headteacher</b>	Diane Stygal
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 December 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01992 712775
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