

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School

Daiglen Drive, South Ockendon, Essex, RM15 5RP

Inspection dates 26–27 February 2014

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		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Achievement varies between year groups and between subjects.
- Pupils’ achievement in writing is not as good as it is in reading or mathematics.
- Pupils’ achievement in Key Stage 1 requires improvement, especially in writing.
- Teachers do not make enough use of marking and so pupils repeat the same mistakes.
- The work that pupils are given does not challenge them enough, especially the more-able pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders at all levels are bringing about improvements in teaching and in targeted areas such as pupils’ reading.
- There have been improvements in the achievement of some pupils, especially last year when Year 6 pupils made good progress, especially in mathematics and reading.
- Provision for pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.
- Pupils are well-behaved, courteous and polite. There are good relationships in the school between pupils and adults.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons, seven of which were joint observations with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work and listened to a sample of pupils from Years 1, 2 and 6 read.
- Meetings were held with pupils and school staff including senior leaders and subject leaders. A meeting was held with three members of the governing body, including the Chair. Another meeting also took place with a representative from the local authority.
- School documents were examined, including those relating to safeguarding arrangements, information on pupils' achievement, headteacher's reports and school improvement planning.
- The inspector took account of the views of 14 parents through the Parent View website. The views of staff were considered through the 40 staff questionnaires.
- During this inspection, inspectors asked additional questions designed to ascertain the school's view of the impact and effectiveness of local authority services to support school improvement. This information will contribute to work being carried out by Ofsted to assess the use, quality and impact of those services.

Inspection team

Peter Lacey-Hastings, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Gillian Bosschaert	Additional Inspector
Susan Heptinstall	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Holy Cross Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage provision includes a Nursery that caters for three to four year-olds each morning.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is much higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is much higher than average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is average. This is additional funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those in local authority care and those from families in the armed services.
- A significant number of pupils join or leave the school part way through the academic year.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has attained a Quality Inclusion Mark for the work it does to ensure all members of the school community are treated equally.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure the quality of teaching is consistently good or better in all year groups by:
 - giving pupils work that challenges them more, especially the more-able
 - making sure that teachers use marking more effectively and checking that pupils respond to marking in order to improve their work
 - sharing good practice within the school and beyond to improve teaching.
- Ensure pupils' achievement is good or better, especially in writing, by:
 - using teaching assistants more effectively so they can help pupils to make quicker progress
 - giving pupils more time to write for longer periods in order to practise and improve key skills.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Overall achievement in the school varies between year groups and between subjects. Currently, pupils are making better progress in reading and mathematics than in writing.
- When children arrive at the school their skills levels are lower than those expected for their age. This is especially so in their communication, language and literacy skills. Their physical skills are better than in other areas of learning.
- By the time they finish Reception children's attainment is in line with national averages. This means that children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children make quicker progress in Reception Year than they do in the Nursery because more teaching is consistently good in the Reception Year.
- Pupils in Key Stage 1 are making the expected progress and their attainment is in line with national averages. Progress and attainment are better in reading and mathematics than in writing. Last year the proportion of pupils in Year 1 who achieved the expected standard in the national check on phonics (the links between letters and sounds) was above the national average.
- Pupils in Year 6 pupils in 2013 made good progress in reading and mathematics, a significant improvement on 2012, when pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 underachieved. Currently pupils in Key Stage 2 are making good progress in reading. This is because teaching and intervention to support reading are effective. Their progress in writing is slower than in other subjects, but it is still improving.
- The achievement of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is similar to other pupils. Their attainment is approximately one term behind other pupils. The progress they make from their starting points is similar in reading, writing and mathematics. They make better progress in Key Stage 1 than they do in Key Stage 2.
- Pupils from a minority ethnic background generally make similar progress to other pupils and last year some made quicker progress, especially in mathematics. Pupils who are learning English as an additional language also make similar progress to other pupils.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to other pupils overall. Some of these pupils have made good progress.
- The similar progress of groups of pupils reflects school leaders' effectiveness at making sure that everyone has the same chance to succeed. For example, pupils previously identified as having special educational needs have made good progress so they no longer need the support they once received.
- Pupils make similar progress in their sports skills to their overall progress in other subjects. This is because physical activities are taught by teachers and specialised instructors. This contributes to pupils' health and well-being.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching varies too much within the school, with some that is good and some that requires improvement. Overall, however, teaching is improving and there is no longer any inadequate teaching in the school.
- Sometimes groups of pupils do not make good progress. This is often because the work set does not challenge them enough, especially the more-able pupils.
- The teaching of reading is improving through the school and has led to better achievement. For example, last year a greater proportion of pupils in Year 1 achieved the expected standard in their phonics check than in the previous year.
- The teaching of writing requires improvement because good rates of progress have not always been maintained. Progress is sometimes limited because pupils are not given enough time to practise key writing skills.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly, but marking is not always effective. Practice is better amongst older pupils where marking is more specific and they respond thoughtfully to marking, and this contributes to their progress.
- Pupils use a 'traffic light' system to assess and review their own work. This helps them to reflect on how well they are doing. However, this is not always followed up enough in order for pupils to improve work that they found difficult or to challenge them further when they find the work too easy.
- When teaching is most effective, pupils receive clear guidance and instruction about what they need to do. Their progress is checked carefully and where appropriate they are given more challenging tasks.
- Although questioning is often used effectively to help pupils explain their thinking and to challenge them, this is not consistent across the school.
- Teaching assistants are mostly effective, particularly when working with small groups. In whole-class sessions they are sometimes marginalised and do not actively engage with pupils to question and challenge them.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is mostly good and this helps children to make good progress. Teaching is consistently good in the Reception Year.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour is good around the school and in lessons. Pupils are courteous, polite and welcoming to each other and to adults. There are good relationships and the school has a strong ethos that promotes high standards of behaviour.
- Pupils show a positive attitude to learning. They concentrate on their work and apply themselves well to tasks set by teachers. Lessons run smoothly and there is very little low-level disruption. Pupils arrive to lessons on time and have their equipment ready, such as pencils and rulers.
- The encouragement and high expectations of adults contribute to the school's positive

atmosphere. For example, in the playground, adults join in with pupils' games and enjoy their company. Pupils play well together during playtimes and are considerate to each other.

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils understand different forms of bullying, including through the use of technology such as the internet. Pupils say there is no bullying because pupils behave well and when a problem looks likely to start, adults are quick to intervene. They also know the rules for playground safety and why these rules are in place.
- Attendance is high and pupils say they like coming to school.

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders at all levels are bringing about improvements in the quality of teaching. The effectiveness of senior and middle leaders is improving too. Staff changes have taken place and leaders have been successful in ensuring that there is no longer inadequate teaching in the school.
- Leaders are fully aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are taking action that has led to some significant improvements in pupils' achievement. For example, last year's Year 6 pupils made significantly better progress than the 2012 cohort. These improvements have been maintained.
- Teachers with specific responsibilities have to account for the impact of their work, which is evaluated by senior leaders. As a result the proportion of good teaching is improving. Leaders for each key stage monitor the teaching effectively.
- Performance management procedures ensure teachers know they are accountable for pupils' progress and that this is linked to pay progression and the national Teachers' Standards.
- The local authority works well with the school. It is supporting the school effectively in improving teaching and learning and increasing the capacity of leadership. For example, the local authority regularly checks the achievement of pupils and provides support through a consultant who knows the school well and works closely with its leaders.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. For example, during an assembly pupils reflected on poverty around the world and what they can do as a response. They collect funds for charities to help those less well-off. They learn about other cultures and religions.
- There is a wide range of musical and artistic activities, For example, the school choir attended a singing event with other schools. Pupils also learn recorder, violin and guitar, and also perform to parents.
- The way subjects are taught engages pupils and helps them to see the links between different areas of learning. Themes and topics are planned carefully to take account of some mixed-aged classes. Plans have been made for the new National Curriculum.
- All safeguarding requirements are met, including checks on adults working with pupils. Risk assessments and health and safety checks have all been properly carried out.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governing body works closely with the senior leadership team to secure school improvement. Governors have a good understanding of the school and they know how well the school is doing compared to all schools nationally. They are well informed by the headteacher and senior leaders. They review their own effectiveness, which helps them to know their own strengths and areas to improve. Governors have a good overview of teaching in the school and the links between the quality of teaching and pay. Performance targets for the headteacher also link to improvements in teaching, pupils' achievement and to pay progression. There is a good knowledge of how well the school uses the pupil premium funding to support eligible pupils. They know these pupils' achievement is similar to that of other pupils. The governing body keeps close watch on the budget and challenges school leaders to get the best value for money. For example, they requested further costings and fundraising in order to pay for the playground to be resurfaced. The governing body also ensures statutory duties are met including those for 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	115181
Local authority	Thurrock
Inspection number	430809

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	318
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sheila Higginson
Headteacher	Maria Shepherd
Date of previous school inspection	14 June 2012
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