

# Holy Cross School: A Catholic Voluntary Academy

Parsonwood Hill, Whitwick, Coalville, LE67 5AT

**Inspection dates** 8–9 April 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
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

- A significant number of pupils are not making enough progress in writing and mathematics.
- More-able pupils do not consistently achieve as well as they should.
- Pupils in Key Stage 2 are not making as much progress as those in Key Stage 1.
- Teachers do not always plan tasks which all pupils can do and which challenge their thinking. At times, the work pupils are set is too easy for some pupils and too difficult for others. Consequently pupils lose concentration and do not always work as hard as they should.
- Pupils do not always know how to improve their learning or use the information they are given when their work is marked.
- Leaders are not improving teaching or learning fast enough. Their evaluations of the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress are not sufficiently rigorous.
- Subject leaders do not ensure that teachers promote pupils' basic skills of literacy and numeracy across a range of subjects.

### The school has the following strengths

- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress as a result of good teaching and good leadership.
- Pupils make good progress in reading because the school has given it a high priority and it is taught well across the academy.
- Pupils in Key Stage 1 are increasingly making good progress in writing.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium make good progress relative to their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics because they benefit from good support for their learning.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They feel safe and their attendance is above average.
- Governors provide good support for the school and, together with the headteacher, are demonstrating the capacity for improvement.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed six teachers in the 10 lessons seen. Four of these observations were carried out with the headteacher.
- Inspectors heard pupils read and looked at samples of pupils' work with subject leaders for English and mathematics.
- Meetings were held with three groups of pupils and informal discussions took place with different pupils at lunchtime and playtime. Meetings were also held with six members of the governing body, two trustees of the academy, senior and subject leaders, and the leader for the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Inspectors took account of the 12 responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire for parents, the 29 responses to the school's recent survey of parents, and nine responses from parents who attended Mass at the school. Inspectors held informal discussion with a small number of parents who brought their children to school. They also looked at questionnaire responses from staff.
- Inspectors observed the academy's work and looked at a range of documentation. This included safeguarding policies, attendance figures, records of pupils' behaviour and their progress over time, the academy's summary of its self-evaluation, the academy improvement plan and minutes of meetings of the governing body.

## Inspection team

Declan McCarthy, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Janette Daniels

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Holy Cross School converted to become an academy school in July 2012. When its predecessor school was last inspected in March 2011, it was judged to be good.
- Holy Cross is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and only a few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the academy receives the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, in local authority care or with a parent in the armed forces) is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action is broadly average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is high.
- The school population is more stable than in most schools nationally, with few pupils entering or leaving other than at the normal times.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum standards for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- A pre-school playgroup shares the same site and is managed independently from the academy. It is subject to a separate inspection.
- The headteacher was appointed in January 2013.

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

- Improve teaching to at least good and thereby raise achievement, particularly of more-able pupils, by making sure that:
  - pupils are given tasks, particularly in writing and mathematics, which are neither too easy nor too difficult but extend the thinking of each of them
  - lesson activities are well-planned and presented so that pupils remain interested in and committed to their work and acquire new knowledge, skills and understanding quickly
  - teachers make clear to pupils what their next steps for learning are when marking their books.
- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that all leaders, including subject leaders:
  - rigorously monitor and evaluate the impact of teaching over time on all pupils' learning in each year group
  - check that marking policies, regarding the amount of guidance to be given to pupils, are followed consistently by all staff
  - promote the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in different subjects across the academy.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because, as the school's own data and evidence in pupils' books makes clear, not all pupils are making as much progress as they should in writing and mathematics.
- Results in the national assessments and tests in 2013 were broadly average in Year 2 and remained so by the end of Year 6. Too few of the more-able pupils are reaching the higher levels in writing and mathematics.
- Pupils in Key Stage 2 are not making as much progress as those in Key Stage 1 because work is not pitched at the right level; too often it is too easy for some, while others find it too difficult. As a result, on such occasions, pupils do not concentrate fully or always work hard enough.
- Children start in the Reception Year with knowledge and skills that are below those typically seen at their ages. By the time they move to Year 1, they make good progress, showing appropriate levels of development for their ages. This is as a result of good teaching and good leadership.
- Pupils make good progress in reading across the academy because the school has given reading a high priority and the impact of teaching of phonics on pupils' learning is good. Although the proportion gaining the expected level in the Year 1 national phonics screening check was below average in 2013, results were an improvement on 2012. An above-average proportion of pupils who were rechecked in Year 2 reached the expected levels. Pupils are also given regular opportunities to read regularly in class and are encouraged to take their reading books home each day.
- Attainment in writing is continuing to rise in Key Stage 1. As a result of increasingly good teaching, pupils are making better progress in writing than in 2013, particularly in Year 3.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium make good progress relative to their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics because teaching assistants provide good additional support for their learning in these subjects. In 2013, the few Year 6 pupils eligible for the pupil premium were approximately one year behind their classmates in writing and in mathematics and four months behind them in reading, but these gaps are closing steadily.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make progress that is usually at least as expected and, in some cases, good. The new special educational needs coordinator has improved the provision for these pupils so that support is more effective.
- Pupils make good progress in physical development and in staying healthy as a result of good use of the primary sports funding to provide additional sporting activities, such as tag-rugby coaching and hockey.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Although no teaching is inadequate, across the academy, there is too little teaching that is good or better.
- Pupils do not always know how to improve their learning because teachers do not always give

them clear guidance on how to do so when they mark their work. Pupils' written work across a range of subjects is marked mainly with ticks and positive comments, and there is too little guidance to pupils on how to improve their literacy and numeracy skills.

- The work set for pupils is sometimes either too easy or too difficult, and teachers do not always set tasks which challenge the thinking of all pupils appropriately. For example, in a mathematics lesson, a few more-able pupils said that the task was too easy while others, who found their learning too difficult, lost interest and did not work as hard at the tasks set as they should have done.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive good support from teaching assistants in lessons and make steady progress. This is because teaching assistants provide clear explanations of the task, clarify technical language and break learning tasks down into smaller achievable steps. Similarly, pupils eligible for the pupil premium are also receiving good additional support for their learning in literacy and numeracy.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage work hard and make good progress because teaching and opportunities for developing all areas of learning are good. For example, the very few children who are learning English as an additional language, and who started in the Reception class lacking in confidence and finding it difficult to engage in conversations, are provided with extra support to develop their language. As a result, they make rapid progress in communication language and literacy.
- The teaching of reading is good because teachers are skilled in teaching pupils how to link letters to sounds and provide many opportunities for pupils to use these skills in reading and spelling.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. This is the case both in lessons and around the academy. This is because pupils are encouraged to abide by the academy's established code of conduct.
- Pupils respond well to the consistently good management of their behaviour by staff, who maintain excellent relationships with pupils. As a result, pupils are courteous and polite to adults and kind to one another.
- Sometimes behaviour is outstanding, which is confirmed by parents, staff and visitors. This is especially so when pupils go on school visits or trips.
- Pupils' attitudes to their learning not yet outstanding because pupils do not always concentrate or try hard enough when they find work too easy or too difficult.
- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils move calmly from one area of the academy to another and handle equipment and use the internet safely. Parents, staff and pupils say that pupils are safe in school.
- Pupils say there are few incidents of bullying and that staff deal with any bullying quickly and effectively. Pupils are developing a good awareness of the different types of bullying and know how to prevent it. Most parents believe that the school deals with any bullying well.
- Attendance is above average and has been so since the academy opened. Pupils arrive

punctually to lessons, and settle quickly to their work.

### **The leadership and management** requires improvement

- Leaders are not rigorous enough in ensuring that all pupils achieve equally well over time. The headteacher is committed to school improvement and has recently established more robust procedures for managing the performance of teachers, based on the national standards. These measures are beginning to improve the quality of teaching but improvement is not yet fast enough.
- Leaders, including subject leaders, have not sufficiently evaluated the impact of teaching on the learning and progress that pupils make in different subjects. Although there is a sharp focus on developing basic skills of literacy and numeracy in English and mathematics lessons, subject leaders do not provide enough support and guidance to teachers on how to promote the basic skills of literacy and numeracy across a range of different subjects.
- Subject leaders have produced a parents' guide for pupils' writing and are implementing a new approach to teaching mathematics, although these innovations are too recent to have full impact on pupils' learning.
- The headteacher, with good support from the senior leadership team, has improved the academy's use of assessment. Detailed and accurate information about pupils' progress is recorded on a database and pupils' progress is discussed with individual staff every term. Pupils who are falling behind are identified and additional support is provided to enable them to catch up with their learning. Assessment information has been used well to accurately inform the academy's view of achievement and teaching, and to set precise priorities for improvement in the development plan.
- Good leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage has resulted in good achievement and good teaching in this phase.
- Pupils enthusiastically participate in a wide range of after-school clubs, such as music, dance, running. Their learning is enhanced through their participation in school visits and opportunities to go on residential trips.
- The academy has developed strong links with the church and good opportunities for pupils to learn about other world faiths such as Judaism. It encourages pupils to share learning together and show responsibility, and helps them develop their awareness of environmental issues. This promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- The school makes good use of its primary sports funding by enabling staff to develop their skills in teaching physical education, using sports coaches to work alongside teachers and providing increased opportunities for pupils to engage in different sports and competitions with other schools.
- The academy trustees are providing appropriate support and challenge for the work of the school by facilitating close liaison between this academy and good academies within its chain.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors have audited their skills and identified clear areas for improvement. They are holding the academy to account for its work through their committees and, at first hand,

through their visits to the school. They have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and what is being done to improve it. They have ensured that teachers' pay is tied to the progress their pupils make. Governors are using data effectively to shape priorities for improvement and to set realistic objectives for managing the performance of the headteacher. Governors monitor the impact of spending on pupil premium funding on achievement. They are due to consider the impact of spending of primary sports funding at its next meeting. They ensure that the school meets its legal obligations, especially for safeguarding. All training in child protection is up to date, three governors are trained in safer recruitment, and governors have established a safeguarding committee to assure the safety and well-being of all pupils.

## 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>	138297
<b>Local authority</b>	Leicestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	441192

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	189
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	David Ball
<b>Headteacher</b>	Siobhan Minford
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
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