

# Waltham Holy Cross Infant School

Quendon Drive, Waltham Abbey, EN9 1LG

**Inspection dates** 5–6 February 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The strong, principled leadership of the headteacher, together with other senior leadership expertise and support from governors, has secured good teaching and achievement.
- Since the last inspection, pupils have sustained above-average standards in reading, writing and mathematics every year. This prepares them very well for junior school.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage thrive because adults have high expectations of them. The warm welcome they receive ensures that children make a very confident start to school.
- Pupils consistently demonstrate the school council's charter of 'respect, care and share'. Their behaviour is exemplary. They follow the excellent model shown to them by adults, resulting in a high level of mutual trust and respect.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy all that school has to offer and they give the school '10 out of 10'. This is reflected in their attendance, which continues to improve and is above the national average.
- Pupils are kept very safe and are extremely well cared for. They say that adults in the school 'would never let anything happen to us'.
- A varied and exciting range of activities and themes engage pupils, all of whom are enthusiastic learners.
- Provision for pupils' social, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- Partnerships with parents support the pupils' learning well. Parents are highly complimentary about the school and its leaders.
- Leaders' action is narrowing the gap between the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not consistently ensure that pupils apply their handwriting and phonic (letters or groups of letters that represent sounds) skills when writing.
- Teachers' comments on pupils' marked work do not always help pupils to understand what they need to do to improve, particularly in mathematics.
- Subject leaders have not brought about improvements in the teaching of phonics as a key skill for writing. They have not yet ensured that feedback from marking, particularly in mathematics, is effective.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 30 lessons or parts of lessons, including two joint observations with the headteacher and two with the deputy headteacher. Inspectors observed teachers in all year groups at least once.
- Inspectors looked at pupils’ work in books and on classroom displays. They listened to pupils reading. They attended two assemblies.
- Inspectors met with all the leaders in the school and with a group of governors.
- The inspection team met with groups of pupils and talked to them during lessons, in the playground, in the dining hall and as they moved around the school.
- The 60 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken account of and inspectors spoke informally with parents at the start and end of the day.
- Questionnaire returns completed by the 42 members of staff were taken into consideration.
- Many school documents were reviewed. These included: development plans, policies, records of monitoring, safeguarding and planning records, information for families and governing-body documents.

## Inspection team

Ruth Dollner, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Ken Parry	Additional Inspector
David Chaplin	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Waltham Holy Cross Infants School is of average size.
- The large majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and eligible for the pupil premium is lower than average. This is additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those in care.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average. Some have complex physical needs.
- The school has recently made changes to roles and responsibilities within the leadership team, including the deputy headteacher taking responsibility for mathematics. The English leader is new in post.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of two part-time Nursery classes and three full-time Reception classes. Most of the Nursery children transfer to the Reception classes and are joined by children from other pre-school settings.
- The school runs a well-attended breakfast and after-school club.

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

- Help pupils to make more rapid progress so that achievement is outstanding by ensuring that teachers, supported by subject leaders:
  - make clear to pupils in marking what they need to do to improve their work, particularly in mathematics
  - develop a consistent approach to teaching letter formation and handwriting
  - improve their knowledge of how to teach phonics as a skill for writing, and plan regular opportunities for children to apply their phonic skills in writing in all subjects.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The strong and principled leadership of the headteacher is rightly recognised by staff, parents, governors and the local authority as the driving force in inspiring school improvement. All staff share her ambition for even better performance and there is a strong culture of teamwork and common purpose to secure better teaching to match pupils' outstanding behaviour.
- The headteacher is ably supported by all leaders in the school. The deputy headteacher's sharp data analysis has led to continual improvements in supporting any pupils who are falling behind with their work. The deputy headteacher, in her role as mathematics subject leader, and the English subject leader have taken action to secure disadvantaged pupils' rapid progress since September 2014. The learning mentor ably assists the headteacher in providing for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Their action has led to improvements in the progress of these pupils across the school.
- The newly appointed subject leaders for English and mathematics are focused on taking action to make teaching outstanding. The priorities identified are the right ones – the better teaching of phonics, spelling and handwriting, and better direction for pupils from marking on how to improve their mathematics. However, their work to ensure the better teaching of phonics to support pupils' writing and to make marking more effective is too recent to evaluate the impact on teaching and learning.
- Staff morale is high. They are proud to work at the school. They value and respect each other and the pupils. Consequently, pupils of all abilities, whatever their backgrounds, are valued and encouraged to achieve well. This demonstrates the school's commitment to equal opportunity and determination to tackle any discrimination.
- Additional funding is used carefully to ensure that the needs of disadvantaged pupils are met. As a result, the school's own data and work in pupils' books show that any difference between their progress and that of their classmates, which was evident in July 2014, continues to close.
- A wide range of subjects and topics are taught which engage and enthuse pupils. Many visits and activities enhance the curriculum. The school has successfully implemented the new National Curriculum in Year 1 and has developed assessment arrangements to evaluate pupils' progress and identify the next steps in their learning. These changes are directing and supporting learning well.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. British values are promoted through the school council's charter and through specific themes, such as homework focusing on the role of the Queen. As a result, the school prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- Primary sports funding is used well. Staff report that the training they have received with this funding has increased their confidence in teaching sport. The impact on pupils' healthy lifestyles and physical development is clear. For example, in a Year 2 lesson on throwing and catching, pupils checked their heart rate before and after exercise to find out the impact the exercise had on their bodies.
- Leaders ensure that all safeguarding requirements are met. Consequently, procedures are well understood and followed carefully by all staff and pupils.
- The local authority recognises the school's strengths and, therefore, currently provides a low level of monitoring and support. Consequently, the local authority's impact on the school is, understandably, limited. The headteacher is aware that she can draw on local authority support should it be needed.
- The school rightly has the confidence of parents. Parents speak highly of the school and the headteacher. They believe the school to be 'the best school in the area'.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body is effective. The members of the governing body provide a good range of

experience and expertise which they use well to strengthen school leadership.

- Governors share the headteacher’s ambition to take the school further forward and have a clear understanding of priorities for raising achievement and for improving the quality of teaching. They know what the quality of teaching is across the school.
- Governors monitor the school closely. They visit regularly and write careful records of their visits so all colleagues are well informed.
- They understand clearly the school’s performance data on pupils’ progress and attainment.
- Finances are monitored closely. Governors ensure that additional funding is used effectively and are well informed of the impact of this funding on pupils’ progress.
- Governors use external advice to support them in the performance management of the headteacher. They are fully informed about the performance management of teachers and apply the link between performance targets, pupils’ progress and teachers’ pay.
- Governors are given a high profile on the website, which provides a valuable communication channel. Governors arrange times to be available to meet with parents during parents’ evenings and other events. However, very few parents have concerns to share with governors.

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

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. The school’s meticulous records show no exclusions, racist incidents, bullying or challenging behaviour. Pupils’ behaviour is impeccable in lessons, in the playground, in breakfast and after-school clubs and around the school. In the dining hall, they chat happily to each other. They play games together, such as ‘rock, paper, scissors’, while queuing patiently for their food.
- Pupils’ attendance is above average and there are rigorous procedures in place to improve it further.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and are enthusiastic learners. They know when they come to school they will ‘learn new things’.
- The ethos of the school council’s charter, which focuses on ‘respect, sharing and caring’, pervades attitudes across the school. Pupils are friendly and welcoming and have a wonderful sense of humour. They are polite and helpful to adults and to each other. They are sociable and lively in conversation.
- In the lessons observed during the inspection, there was no disruption of any kind. Pupils listen carefully to their teachers, talk and learn enthusiastically together; they show great pride in what they achieve because of the considerable effort they put into their work. One example of this was a child in the Nursery, who with a broad smile enthusiastically thrust a wet painting into an inspector’s hand saying, ‘Hello, do you like my Innuite igloo?’

### **Safety**

- The school’s work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. There is a culture of vigilance and promotion of safety within the school. Pupils say that they feel very safe and that the ‘adults would never let anything happen to us.’ Parents fully support this view.
- Safeguarding checks on staff and governors prior to their appointments are extremely thorough.
- The building is kept safe and secure at all times.
- Pupils and parents say there is no bullying in school and school records confirm this.
- Pupils know that they can go to any adults if they have concerns and they also say that they can go to each other too for personal support.
- The pupils understand the implications of communicating via the internet. The school has provided special assemblies on e-safety.

**The quality of teaching is good**

- Teaching is typically good. As a result, pupils make good progress in literacy, reading and mathematics. Teaching has sustained pupils' above-average attainment in reading, writing and mathematics since the last inspection.
- Because of well-directed teaching this year, disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and disadvantaged pupils are making progress which is in line with that of their classmates. Gaps in attainment are closing because teaching is effective. The most-able pupils are well challenged to attain higher levels in all subjects.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs learn well from good teaching. The learning mentor supports teachers and teaching assistants in planning work that starts from where pupils are at in their learning and moves them on. Pupils are well supported by teaching assistants. The teaching and care for pupils who have complex physical needs are often outstanding.
- Pupils enjoy school because teachers and teaching assistants make learning interesting. An example of this was the 'monster footprints' which awaited pupils when they arrived at their Reception classes, stimulating their interest and getting them ready for the day's work.
- Good teaching enables pupils to read well. Lower-attaining pupils use their phonic skills to help them 'sound out' words. Pupils often read to adults at home and at school. The many displays around the school of books, authors and topics encourage pupils to develop a love of reading.
- Pupils' progress in writing is sometimes held back because teachers are not confident in their knowledge of how to use phonics to develop writing. Therefore, pupils are not always supported in applying the good phonic skills they use in their reading, to the writing process. Pupils do not consistently apply their handwriting skills and correct letter formation when they write.
- When they mark pupils' work, most teachers write helpful comments that tell pupils how well they have done and how they can improve. However, this good practice is not consistent across the school, particularly in mathematics.
- Pupils make particularly strong progress in many lessons from teachers' and teaching assistants' use of questioning to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding and move their learning on. When teaching is at its strongest, staff listen carefully to pupils' responses and pose a challenge or a question which stretches their thinking.

**The achievement of pupils is good**

- Pupils achieve well and make good progress from their starting points. Since the last inspection, pupils leaving the school at the end of Year 2 have attained above-average standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils make good progress during their time in the Nursery and Reception classes and a large majority of them reach a good level of development by the time they leave Reception. They are prepared well for Key Stage 1.
- A large proportion of the most-able pupils reach the higher levels of attainment in all subjects. Work in pupils' books shows that the most able in Year 2 are already attaining standards which are above those expected at the end of Key Stage 1 in writing and mathematics. In lessons, they benefit from challenging work. For example, in a Year 2 English lesson on 'writing descriptions', the most-able pupils worked with a teaching assistant to improve and expand on their descriptive phrases. This led to their rapid progress within the lesson.

- In the 2014 phonics screening check, the proportion of pupils reaching the nationally expected standard was slightly above average. The pupils who did not meet the expected standard have not yet caught up with their classmates and the school is rightly reviewing provision to ensure that they receive the systematic teaching of phonics required to meet the national standard. Pupils' weaknesses in phonics prevent their more rapid progress in writing.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are making progress in line with that of their classmates. Since July 2014, their progress has accelerated due to a rigorous review of provision undertaken by the headteacher and the learning mentor. Teaching now supports these pupils' needs more effectively. Work in books and the school's own data show that they are making good progress.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils is improving. In 2014, disadvantaged pupils supported by additional funding left the school about a term behind pupils nationally in reading and mathematics and half a term behind in writing. They were almost two terms behind other pupils in the school in reading and mathematics and over a term behind in writing. The school's own pupil-progress data and the work in pupils' books show that disadvantaged pupils are currently making progress which is in line with that of their classmates and gaps between their attainment and that of their classmates are closing.

### The early years provision

is good

- Parents are right to be delighted with the way their children settle into school life in the Nursery and Reception classes. Children skip happily into school and cannot wait to get involved in the range of exciting activities awaiting them.
- From various starting points, children attending the Nursery classes make good progress. They blend well with children from a range of other pre-school settings when they move to the Reception classes.
- When children start school, their skills are broadly in line with those typical for their age in physical development and writing. In most other areas of development, their skills are slightly below what is typical. They make good progress during the Reception Year and their achievement at the end of the year is usually above that seen nationally.
- Leadership and management across the Early Years Foundation Stage are good and link seamlessly with the leadership and management of the whole school. Policies and practices are consistent across the school and the assistant headteacher in her role as Early Years' co-ordinator ensures that progress is tracked in the same rigorous way that it is in Key Stage 1.
- Warm relationships exist between adults and children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children get excited about their learning because adults set up activities, both indoors and out, that draw them in. Children's behaviour is outstanding and they sustain their concentration because the activities are suitably challenging and they enjoy themselves when they are learning.
- The needs of individual children are well met and those with weaker skills when they start school catch up quickly. This is due to the careful checks made on their progress as well as the skilful teaching they receive. Staff keep very illustrative 'learning journeys' to chart the progress of the children, and parents also contribute to these.

## 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>	115286
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	448463

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	262
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Peter Lisher
<b>Headteacher</b>	Deirdre Mooney
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8 February 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01992 713191
<b>Email address</b>	admin@cross-inf.essex.sch.uk

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