

# Waltham Holy Cross Junior School

Quendon Drive, Waltham Abbey, EN9 1LG

## Inspection dates

3–4 June 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Staff changes and weak teaching in the past have limited the progress of pupils in Year 6. Recent improvements to teaching have not enabled enough of them to catch up. Although most pupils in Year 6 made the expected progress in reading, too few have made more than the expected progress from their high starting points, in writing and mathematics.
- Teaching has improved but the weak subject knowledge of a few teachers hinders pupils' progress in improving their skills in writing and mathematics. Some teaching does not tackle pupils' misconceptions well enough.
- Writing is improving in most year groups, however, older pupils have limited knowledge of effective strategies to spell unfamiliar and complex words. Teachers do not always identify spelling mistakes in pupils' writing quickly enough to prevent repeated errors.
- The presentation of pupils' written work is often poor. Some teachers do little to improve pupils' handwriting by teaching it regularly or well enough.
- Pupils in some classes have too few opportunities to apply their improved mathematical skills in differing contexts or to solve problems. Some of the work in science lessons is not challenging enough and does not help pupils to develop their investigative skills, limiting opportunities to deepen their understanding.
- Many subject and other middle leaders are new to their role or developing their skills. Although they are growing in confidence, they do not have a significant impact on improving standards in their area of responsibility.
- The curriculum has been too narrow in the past. Leaders have begun to address this but the quality of pupils' work in religious education, history and geography does not match that in English and mathematics.

### The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders are relentless in their determination to improve outcomes for pupils. They have established a highly positive culture of school improvement.
- Many more pupils in Years 3 to 5 are making the expected and more than the expected progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Senior leaders have tackled inadequate teaching decisively. They have successfully improved the quality of teaching so that much of it is now good
- In-class and additional support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is effective in ensuring good progress for most of these pupils.
- Teaching assistants make a positive contribution to pupils' progress. Their support for the least able and those who have special educational needs is particularly effective.
- Pupils enjoy their lessons and have positive attitudes to learning. They behave well and feel safe.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed pupils learning in all of the 12 classes in the school as well as in several small teaching groups. Two of the lesson observations were conducted jointly with the executive headteacher. Inspectors looked at pupils' work in their books.
- One of the inspectors attended a whole-school assembly and the inspection team observed pupils' behaviour at break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors spoke informally with parents before school. They met with two groups of pupils and talked with them in lessons and in the playground. They considered 38 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents and carers, Parent View.
- Inspectors looked at the school's records of attendance, behaviour, attainment and progress. They scrutinised improvement plans and documents relating to safeguarding as well as evidence of the school's checks on teaching and learning.
- Inspectors met with senior and middle leaders, two representatives of the local authority and two governors.

## Inspection team

Michelle Winter, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Rebekah Iiyambo

Additional Inspector

Jackie Pentlow

Additional Inspector

## Full report

*In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.*

### Information about this school

- Waltham Holy Cross Junior School is larger than the average primary school. It is due to close in September 2015 when Waltham Holy Cross Infant School will increase its age range to accommodate pupils in Key Stage 2.
- The school is led jointly by an executive headteacher and the headteacher of the linked infant school, who both work part time at the school.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced a large number of staff changes in the teaching team.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and supported by additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is broadly average.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language are below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
  - ensuring that all teachers have the subject knowledge they need to teach English and mathematics effectively and so that they can address pupils' misconceptions
  - ensuring that all teachers address spelling errors in pupils' writing and teach all pupils the strategies they need to attempt to spell unfamiliar words
  - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve in science, particularly for the most able pupils
  - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve in foundation subjects such as religious education, history and geography.
- Raise pupils' achievement by:
  - increasing the opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematics knowledge to complex problems and in different contexts
  - increasing the opportunities for pupils to develop their investigative skills in science lessons
  - improving pupils' handwriting and setting higher expectations for the way work is presented.
- Develop the role of subject and other middle leaders so that they have a greater impact on raising standards.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management

### requires improvement

- Middle leadership in the school is not well developed. Most of the school's subject and other middle leaders are new to their role and are still developing their skills. They are not making a significant impact on improving teaching or progress in their areas of responsibility. The drive for school improvement comes from the senior leadership team and, although other leaders are being supported to improve their effectiveness, the involvement of other staff in this work is at an early stage.
- The appointment of the deputy headteacher from the infant school has facilitated pupils' smooth transition from Year 2. Her work has halted the previous dip in achievement in Year 3, by raising teachers' expectations of what pupils in Year 3 can achieve.
- Senior leaders have addressed the previous significant weaknesses in the school with vigour and determination. Since the school was judged inadequate, staff turnover has been high and some classes have had several changes of teacher over a school year. Despite this difficulty, the quality of teaching has improved. Much of the teaching of mathematics and English has improved. However, the weak subject knowledge of a small minority of teachers is yet to be addressed. Intensive training and coaching has been effective in improving the quality of teaching. Senior leaders have developed a model of what good teaching looks like at Waltham Holy Cross Junior School; consequently, teachers are clear about the school's expectations of them.
- Using robust and accurate data, senior leaders track pupils' achievement rigorously. They hold regular meetings with teachers to discuss pupils' attainment and progress. Senior leaders identify pupils at risk of falling behind and, with their teachers, find ways to help them catch up.
- Senior leaders check the quality of teaching regularly. They observe teaching in lessons, scrutinise the work in pupils' books and link this to data on pupils' attainment and progress. This gives them an accurate view of the quality of teaching over time and enables them to provide helpful feedback to teachers to help them improve. Much of this monitoring has focused on the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics. It is beginning to extend to the teaching of other subjects in the curriculum but has not yet brought about the improvements needed in these subjects.
- Leaders have recently revised the curriculum to ensure that all pupils are taught a broad and balanced range of subjects. They have not yet done enough to ensure the quality of work in subjects such as religious education, history and geography improves. In these subjects teachers' expectations of pupils are too low.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils learn about different faiths and cultures. They take part in local and foreign visits and have established links with a school overseas. Pupils learn about the rule of law and democracy. They have a growing understanding of the different types of families that exist which might be different to their own. This promotes their understanding and tolerance, and supports the school's work to tackle discrimination. Pupils develop their social skills well and work together cooperatively. The school fosters good relationships. Pupils are, therefore, becoming well equipped for life in modern Britain.
- Many of the school's disadvantaged pupils benefit from small-group teaching and additional support. This is helping them to make faster progress and is effective in closing the gaps between their attainment and those of others in their class. The school's work promotes equality of opportunity well.
- The primary school physical education (PE) and sports funding is being used well to improve teachers' skills in teaching PE. It has provided additional opportunities for pupils to participate in sporting activities and competitions.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are safe. Pre-employment checks on adults working in the school are completed and recorded diligently. Appropriate action is taken when there are concerns about a pupil's welfare, including working with social workers and the police.
- The small proportion of parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, during the last

year showed little confidence in aspects of the school's work. However, the school's own recent survey completed by many more parents has much more positive results. The vast majority of parents in this survey were highly positive about the progress their children make, behaviour in the school and its leadership. All parents spoken with during the inspection praised the work of the school.

- The recent improvements in teaching, achievement and behaviour, driven by effective leaders, indicate that the school has the capacity to improve further.
- The local authority has brokered effective support for the school by working with Lilac Sky Schools; the organisation that has provided the leadership of the executive headteacher and training to improve teaching. Officers from the local authority have worked with the school to improve the accuracy of teachers' assessments and to support leaders. Staff from the local authority also monitor the school's improvement carefully through its regular strategic board meetings, attended by governors and school leaders.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governance is effective.
  - Governors receive detailed information about the performance of the school. They have received training to enable them to question the data on pupils' attainment and progress presented by the school. They are knowledgeable about the strengths and weaknesses of teaching. Governors have supported senior leaders in taking tough decisions to tackle inadequate teaching.
  - The governing body questions the pay increases proposed for teachers to ensure that staff are rewarded for their effectiveness. They have steered the school effectively towards the forthcoming amalgamation of the infant and junior schools into a primary school by building close links with the infant school. Governors have ensured the smooth transition of the leadership team, by allocating funding to provide joint leadership by the executive headteacher and the headteacher of the infant school during the summer term.
  - Governors from both schools have put in place a new staffing structure for the amalgamated school in September and all posts have now been filled. Governors from the junior school plan to transfer to the governing body of the infant school in September. This strategic and practical approach is typical of the work of governors do to maintain effective leadership and continuing school improvement.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The consistent application of the school's behaviour policy and the diligent tracking of its impact have contributed well to the improved behaviour since the previous inspection.
- More engaging lessons and higher expectations of pupils have helped to develop their typically positive attitudes to learning. The poor presentation of pupils' work is not an indicator of a lack of pride but a result of the ineffective teaching of handwriting and the inconsistent expectations of some teachers. In classes where handwriting is taught regularly and well, pupils' books are a credit to them. Pupils are focused in lessons; they work together well and try hard to do their best. Adults effectively support pupils who find managing their own behaviour difficult, to ensure that lessons run smoothly.
- Pupils move around the school sensibly and calmly. They stand aside in corridors for others to pass. They are polite and friendly to staff, each other and visitors. They are proud of their school and adhere to the school's uniform policy.
- Older pupils have responsibilities that contribute to the life of the school, including by acting as school councillors and peer mentors. Pupils enjoy a range of activities in the playground and the school fields that contribute to their good behaviour.
- Attendance is monitored carefully and the school works with parents when attendance falls. Consequently, attendance has improved and is now above average. Persistent absence has reduced.

## Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The school is well ordered and supervised diligently.
- Pupils are knowledgeable about the main forms of bullying and they trust staff to help them if they are concerned. They are particularly clear about how to keep themselves safe when using information and communication technology, including mobile phones and the internet. They know how to report their concerns.
- Pupils have confidence that incidents of poor behaviour, name-calling and bullying are dealt with well by staff. The pastoral manager tracks incidents of poor behaviour to spot triggers and trends.
- Recent learning about different sorts of families has helped pupils to consider carefully the impact of their words on some pupils. Incidents of the use of the word 'gay' as a derogatory term have reduced, for example, because staff have made clear that this is not acceptable.

## The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Despite intensive training for teachers, some teachers lack the subject knowledge they need to ensure that all pupils make good progress. Some teachers do not do enough to ensure that pupils' spelling and handwriting improve quickly. In some classes, pupils do not have enough opportunities to use their improving mathematics knowledge to solve problems and develop their reasoning skills.
- Although teaching has improved and much of it is good, the school's focus on improving outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics has meant that there has been less improvement in other areas of the curriculum. Teachers' expectations in some subjects such as religious education, history and geography are not always high enough.
- Science lessons now take place more regularly but teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop their investigative skills. Undemanding worksheets and tasks that do not challenge pupils limit progress in this subject area, particularly for the most able pupils.
- These remaining weaknesses are not widespread. Most teachers develop pupils' reading, writing and mathematics skills well. They provide work that is challenging and meets pupils' needs. They set this work in interesting contexts and pupils' enthusiasm for learning has improved considerably since the previous inspection.
- Reading is taught well and pupils engage in this enthusiastically. They have regular opportunities to read in school and they enjoy reading to an adult. There is a growing culture of reading enhanced by the interesting books the school provides.
- Pupils have a growing understanding of how to write for different purposes and their use of appropriate punctuation and grammar is improving quickly. The texts that pupils use as starting points for writing are engaging and well-chosen to stimulate enthusiasm for writing, including for boys.
- The additional support that pupils receive in lessons and in small groups sessions is particularly effective. Disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and the most able benefit from this focused teaching. Pupils with special educational needs are particularly positive about their learning because of the support they receive; their confidence in lessons is growing. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to this aspect of the school's work.
- All teachers provide useful and regular feedback to pupils when they mark English and mathematics books. They routinely identify next steps in learning and tell pupils clearly, what they need to improve. Pupils' individual learning targets are regularly updated and these help pupils to consider their priorities for improvement. There is too little focus, however, on correcting spelling mistakes.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are very positive and built on respect. Classrooms are engaging

learning environments and time is used well. Pupils have regular opportunities to work together and this contributes positively to their well-developed social skills. Lessons promote pupils' speaking and listening skills well; they talk about their work confidently and are not afraid to make mistakes.

### The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Too few pupils in Year 6 have made expected progress in writing and better than expected progress in writing and mathematics. Although their progress has accelerated in Year 6 it has been insufficient to make up for lost learning in the past. The Year 6 pupils entered the school with above average attainment, their current attainment is broadly average in writing and mathematics and above average in reading.
- Most pupils in Years 3 to 5 are making at least expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics and are working at or above age-related expectations. A significant proportion of pupils are making progress that is better than this because of improved teaching.
- The small proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language fare as well as other pupils in the school. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs generally make good progress and they often make better progress than other pupils because of the good support they receive.
- The gaps in attainment for disadvantaged pupils are closing compared with the wide gaps in the 2014 Year 6 assessments. In 2014, disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 left the school about a year and a half behind their classmates in mathematics and nearly a year behind them in reading and writing. They were also about a year and a half behind other pupils nationally in mathematics, nearly a year behind in reading, but two terms behind in writing. Disadvantaged pupils in the current Year 6 have made faster progress and are approximately one term behind their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics. The gaps in attainment for disadvantaged pupils in other year groups are closing rapidly. For example, in Year 3 there is no gap in attainment in reading.
- In the 2014 Year 6 assessments, too few pupils who attained Level 3 in the infant school made expected progress to attain Level 5 in Year 6. The progress of the most-able pupils is now faster because teaching more closely meets their needs. Despite these improvements in most year groups, too few pupils in Year 6 are on track to attain Level 5 in writing. This is because the better teaching that now exists has come too recently to make up for slow progress in the past.
- Achievement in other subjects lags behind the improving progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils do not always have good opportunities to develop their skills and depth of knowledge in science, religious education, history and geography.

## 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>	462979

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>	319
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Peter Lisher
<b>Headteacher</b>	Vicky Rezaie
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9 January 2014
<b>Telephone number</b>	01992 712775
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