

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School

Millfield Avenue, East Cowes, Isle of Wight, PO32 6AS

Inspection dates 8–9 July 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
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.

- Leadership and management are good. The determination and strong partnership of the headteacher and assistant headteacher in recent years have successfully improved teaching, leading to a steady rise in attainment.
- Governors offer effective challenge and support to leaders in their drive to continue to improve teaching and raise standards further.
- Children join the school with knowledge and skills that are typical for their age, although some aspects of literacy are weaker. Good provision in the early years ensures that they make good progress. They are well prepared for Year 1.
- By the time they leave, Year 6 pupils are reaching standards that are above average in reading and mathematics and average in writing. All groups of pupils make good progress from their various starting points.
- Extra funding is used well to support disadvantaged pupils. The gap between them and other pupils has closed for reading and writing and is reducing rapidly in mathematics.
- Pupils enjoy learning because of the creative and imaginative way different subjects are planned and taught. The school uses the local area especially well to provide activities that enthuse pupils. As a result, pupils' attendance is above average.
- Almost all pupils behave well and display a good attitude to learning. A very small minority have challenging behaviour, but this is well managed and is not allowed to disrupt the learning of others.
- The school's efforts to keep pupils safe and secure are good. Pupils say they feel very safe in school and this is confirmed by parents.
- The school's mission statement of 'A Holy Cross pupil C.A.R.E.S' is consistently promoted. This encourages pupils to be confident, aspirational, resilient, enquiring and spiritual. It makes a strong contribution to the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and underpins all of its work.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Some teachers do not adapt tasks to challenge pupils sufficiently and move them on quickly.
- The school's marking policy is not consistently applied in mathematics so some pupils do not know how to improve their work.
- Targets for learning and behaviour are not specific enough to meet the needs of some pupils.
- Interventions are not checked regularly enough to ensure that they are successful in helping some pupils to improve quickly.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors looked at learning in 15 lessons and observed the work of seven teachers. Teaching assistants and higher-level teaching assistants were observed working with whole classes, individual pupils and small groups, including teaching physical education. Some observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors attended class assemblies, talked to pupils about their work and life at school, and heard individual pupils read.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documents. These included systems for checking progress, records relating to behaviour and attendance, safeguarding procedures and analysis by the school of how well it is doing and how it plans to improve. Records of checks on the quality of teaching and the minutes of the governing body meetings were examined.
- Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work across a range of subjects and classes, especially writing and mathematics.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, school staff and groups of pupils. Individual pupils were spoken to in lessons and around the school. A conversation took place with an adviser from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the views expressed in 68 online responses from Parent View and informal meetings with parents during the inspection.
- Inspectors considered the results of 20 questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Anna Sketchley, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

David Shears

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Holy Cross Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Children in the early years attend the Reception class on a full-time basis.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is below that found in most schools. This is additional government funding provided to give extra support to those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and to children who are looked after by the local authority.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- Since the school was last inspected in 2009 it has changed from a first school to a primary school and pupils remain at Holy Cross until they move to secondary education at the end of Year 6.
- There is a separately managed pre-school adjacent to the school, but this was not a part of this inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to raise achievement further by providing teachers with opportunities to learn from exemplary practice so that:
 - teachers develop skills that enable them to check and adapt learning in lessons, enabling pupils make the best progress they can
 - the school's marking policy is used consistently and effectively to help pupils improve in mathematics.
- Improve the leadership and management of provision for special educational needs by:
 - developing targets for learning and behaviour that specifically support pupils' individual needs so that they are able to make the best progress they can
 - ensuring that there are rigorous and regular procedures in place to evaluate how successful extra teaching and support have been in helping pupils to make good progress.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and assistant headteacher's strong partnership and complementary skills have effectively driven the school forward since the previous inspection. During this time leaders at all levels, including governors, have successfully managed change and quickened improvement in pupils' achievement.
- Governors offer a well-balanced amount of challenge and support for all leaders. Regular links with subject leaders and visits to school keep them well informed of pupils' progress.
- Middle leaders, especially for English and mathematics, have developed their skills in coaching other teachers because they have received strong support and effective training from the local authority. As a result, teaching has improved and standards have risen. However, the school recognises that some teachers still do not have the skills they need to ensure that pupils make even more rapid progress.
- Almost all disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress. However, teaching and support that might help them make better than expected progress are slow in being put into place. Checking on the success of support is currently not sufficiently regular.
- Leaders have a relentless focus on developing good behaviour and attitudes to learning. This is very clear from the emphasis placed upon the school's mission statement of C.A.R.E.S. Adults consistently use this with pupils, ensuring a calm and harmonious atmosphere in which all pupils can flourish as learners. All pupils are treated equally and the school does not tolerate any discrimination.
- Leaders have rigorous procedures for checking the quality of teaching. Teachers and teaching assistants are regularly observed teaching and pupils' books are scrutinised to confirm they are making quick enough progress. Teachers fully understand the progress pupils are expected to make. Professional development has been offered quickly where necessary and previous weaknesses in teaching have been successfully addressed. However, leaders know that some teachers still need help to sharpen their skills more in order to achieve exemplary practice and ensure that pupils make even more rapid progress.
- Leaders plan subjects creatively, making particularly good use of the rich experiences available in the local area. Pupils enjoy memorable experiences as they act as tour guides for English Heritage at Osborne House, taking over the museum for the day. They quickly build their historical skills and practise their speaking and listening and personal and social skills very well as they meet visitors and explain exhibits. Rich opportunities for writing include producing a leaflet for publication entitled, 'A Child's Guide to Osborne'. Working with the local theatres to re-enact Shakespeare plays such as *Henry V* and *The Tempest*, camping on the school field and a residential visit to Paris ensure that pupils learn many valuable skills through these opportunities to learn from first-hand experience.
- Teachers check carefully to ensure that learning properly covers the content and skills required by the curriculum. Literacy skills are practised especially well across themes and subjects.
- Pupils' understanding of the cultural diversity that exists in Britain today is well developed. The school recognises the need to plan this very overtly. Pupils are encouraged to regard all faiths, races and cultures with respect and tolerance, supporting the fundamental British values agenda. To this end pupils study other religions in detail. For example learning through the eyes of a child of a similar age to themselves, how people of the Hindu religion, who live in Leicester, celebrate the festival of Divali. A residential visit to London also immerses pupils in a culture that is in real contrast to their life on the Isle of Wight.
- Leaders promote democracy and economic well-being especially well. For example, pupils prepared a full campaign to establish their new Learning Council to coincide with the General Election, borrowing real ballot boxes from the local authority. Pupils also run a profitable tuck shop, giving a start-up loan to pupils wishing to start a stationery shop and charging a small amount of interest! All of these activities prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- The school has recently reviewed the way extra sports funding is used. Expertise that exists within the school is now used effectively to provide more training for staff to ensure that physical education is taught well. This is enabling the school to successfully continue to sustain opportunities for pupils to learn a wide range of sport in the future. Currently pupils benefit from enjoying many different sports including skateboarding, golf, tennis, ballet, tag rugby, gymnastics, cricket and football. Close to half the school attend after-school sports activities and some attend more than one club. These activities are helping pupils to develop their enjoyment of sport and an understanding of how sport can contribute to leading a healthy lifestyle.
- The school spends the pupil premium effectively to support disadvantaged pupils to ensure that they make the best progress they can. As a result, the gap between these pupils and others in the school and nationally has closed in reading and writing by Year 6. The gap in mathematics is reducing rapidly.
- Partnerships with other local schools support teachers' professional development well. Links with the local

community and parents provide well for many aspects of pupils' learning and development.

- The school's safeguarding procedures are secure, meet requirements and keep all pupils safe. This view is shared by parents. All adults in the school are fully aware of the processes to follow should they be concerned about a pupils' safety. Teachers are very aware of the 'Prevent' strategy and their responsibility to protect pupils at risk from potential radicalisation.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governance is effective. Governors are well informed about the school's performance because they visit regularly, accompanying leaders on walks to observe how well pupils are learning. They meet with subject leaders, listen to presentations and receive comprehensive reports about pupils' progress. They take their responsibilities seriously, attending training to ensure that they meet their statutory duties. This helps governors to use the school and national information they gather about pupils' achievements to gauge how well pupils are performing. Governors have a good understanding of how teachers' performance is used to improve or eradicate weak teaching. They receive an annual anonymised summary about the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' progress. Governors regularly challenge leaders and hold them to account for all aspects of the school's work. For example, governors have recently asked pertinent questions about the staffing structure for the next school year. Governors also offer the school considerable support and encouragement.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. No pupil has been excluded. Records of a small number of minor breaches of behaviour are well kept and analysed. This has enabled the school to make positive changes to the management of break times and lunchtimes. Playtimes are sensibly staggered to avoid overcrowding of the hard playground and to give pupils more space to play. The introduction of 'play buddies' and the wide range of activities provided at lunchtimes also make a good contribution to pupils' ability to manage their own behaviour well.
- The vast majority of pupils are polite and well-mannered and move around the school and to and from the playground and field calmly. Pupils get on very well together both at play and in lessons and judge learning to be good. They say, 'We look out for each other. If someone is lonely there is the buddy bench.'
- Pupils were often observed during the inspection helping each other with their work and discussing ideas to take their learning forward. They know the school's mission statement very well and almost all of them adhere to this caring ethos to the best of their ability in lessons.
- A very small minority of pupils sometimes exhibit challenging behaviour. This is well managed and does not disrupt the learning of other pupils. Although these pupils are managed appropriately, some pupils with very specific needs require intensive support. Behaviour support plans giving clear targets for improvement to help these pupils to change their behaviour are not yet in place.
- Pupils enjoy the different responsibilities they are given and take their duties seriously. They are keen to talk about their charity work and how they help others. These responsibilities make a significant contribution to pupils' personal development and help to prepare them well for secondary school.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils could discuss the safety of the school site and told of fire drills each term that are held at different times of the day to ensure that they know what to do. As a result, they say they feel very safe in school. This view is confirmed by parents.
- Pupils say that bullying is rare but if there is a problem it is dealt with very swiftly. They have a good understanding of the different kinds of bullying and discussed the regular focus of the school on how to keep safe when using the internet.
- The school's commitment to develop confidence and resilience in their pupils is demonstrated by the opportunities pupils have to take controlled risks. For example, pupils experience adventurous learning such as the development of the school's 'discovery copse' in the grounds, camping, residential visits, sailing opportunities and Forest Schools.
- Safeguarding systems for protecting pupils, such as vetting staff and reporting concerns about pupils' well-being, are rigorously adhered to.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching enables all groups of pupils to make good progress over time.
- Teachers plan imaginative learning so pupils are keen and interested and want to learn.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge ensures that the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics are well taught. Writing skills are effectively taught across a range of activities and for different purposes.
- Pupils demonstrate the use of their good reading skills when reading their tasks in lessons and they are keen to read examples of their imaginative writing to their classmates. Their progress in writing is not inhibited by an inability to read and check their own work.
- Pupils' imagination was caught and they responded well when writing the first draft of their 'Child's Guide to Osborne House' following their visit the day before. Pupils made good progress with their writing because the teacher provided samples of leaflets and made sure that pupils understood about the features of a leaflet that should be included.
- Teachers question pupils well giving them time to answer and sometimes choosing pupils without their hand up to encourage all pupils to have a go and to ensure that all participate in the learning. They probe pupils' understanding by asking them to explain their answers. This is particularly well done in mathematics.
- All pupils made good progress when learning about time in a mathematics lesson. The most able pupils were challenged well when asked to calculate times between listings of television programmes. Playing a game matching the clock time with the written time was accurately matched to the needs of less able pupils. This group of pupils were well supported by a skilled teaching assistant.
- Older pupils made good progress when constructing complicated pie charts because their basic number skills were secure.
- However, some teachers do not have the skills to adjust learning quickly enough in lessons. Sometimes activities are either too easy or too hard, but teachers do not change the tasks so pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Sometimes teachers do not check the learning of different groups regularly enough during the lesson. This means that pupils repeat mistakes or disengage with their learning. When this happens they do not disrupt the learning of others but they do not make enough progress.
- Teachers use the school's marking policy consistently to help pupils improve their writing skills. Comments about the next steps to take in their learning are very clear for pupils and they usually respond well and make their corrections. However, the policy is less well used in mathematics and for the most part pupils do not receive enough guidance on how to improve their work.

The achievement of pupils is good

- The achievement of children in the early years has risen over the last few years and is now good. This good progress is being successfully built upon in Years 1 and 2. Assessments in Year 2 this year show that standards have risen considerably and pupils are working above national expectations and are performing especially well in writing.
- Recent changes to the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters represent) is enabling pupils to make much quicker progress with their reading and writing in Years 1 and 2. Results for the national screening check for phonics have improved and standards in Year 1 this year are above the national average for 2014.
- Pupils enjoy reading and most read with fluency and expression from books appropriate to their age and ability. They talk about the kind of books they like to choose and some have favourite authors. The school's strong reading culture has ensured that standards in reading in national tests in Year 6 in 2013 and 2014 were well above average.
- Standards in mathematics in 2014 were also above average and average in writing. Since the school's first Year 6 pupils took the national tests in 2012, standards have increased year on year.
- The current Year 6 are working at above expected levels of skill for their age this year in reading, but are at expected levels for mathematics and writing. However, percentages have been significantly affected by the abnormally small number of pupils in Year 6 this year because each pupil represents 6% of the total. School information and evidence gathered during the inspection show that standards remain above those expected.
- Pupils make good progress. This year in Year 6 the percentage of pupils making expected progress is better than that expected nationally in reading and very close to that expected in mathematics and writing. The percentage of pupils making better than expected progress is similar to that expected

nationally in reading but lower in mathematics and writing. Percentages have again been seriously affected by the size of the cohort.

- Evidence in pupils' books, school information and observations in lessons show that the most able pupils are making good progress. The most able pupils in Years 5 and 6 show significant skills in mathematics, for example when using their reasoning skills to answer complex questions while comparing information on pie charts. They showed considerable competency with angles and percentages.
- In 2014, disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 were two and a half terms behind other pupils in the school in mathematics, half a term behind in reading and two terms behind in writing. They were one term behind other pupils nationally in mathematics, close to others nationally in reading and three terms behind in writing.
- This year, school information and early test results for 2015 show that approaches to improve the attainment of disadvantaged pupils have successfully closed the gap between these pupils and their classmates and other pupils nationally in reading and writing. The gap in mathematics has been significantly reduced. Disadvantaged pupils make the same good progress as all other pupils in the school and nationally.
- Almost all disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make the same good progress, from their various starting points, as other pupils in the school. Almost all are well supported in class, in small groups or as individuals and interventions meet their specific needs. Where a very small minority do not make the progress of which they may be capable it is because targets and plans for their learning and behaviour are not specific enough. In addition, interventions for learning and behaviour are not rigorously checked to ensure that they are sufficiently successful and leading to good progress for identified pupils.

The early years provision

is good

- Children begin Reception with skills, knowledge and understanding typical for their age although in some areas of literacy their skills are weaker than typically expected. They progress well because of good provision.
- By the end of the Reception Year, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development is above national expectations. The effective provision in early years prepares children well for Year 1.
- The leadership and management of early years are good. Stronger links are beginning to be established with local pre-schools. As a result, children make a settled and confident start because of opportunities to visit the school prior to joining. Parents are warmly welcomed and encouraged to support their children's learning at home.
- Excellent routines are in place and all adults ensure that children are kept safe and secure at all times. For example, at the end of the day each child is called by name when their parent arrives and they are individually seen safely on their way.
- Regular observations and photographs of children's activities inform detailed planning for their next steps in learning and development. Children's progress is very carefully checked against the national expectations for all areas of learning. Staff share this with parents who are encouraged to contribute with notes about what children do at home. All of this information is carefully recorded and forms a valuable record of individual children's progress during their first year at school.
- Good and sometimes outstanding teaching thoroughly engages children so they tackle tasks with great enthusiasm and excitement. Children made exceptional progress with their number work when involved in a game in the outdoor area. Working in pairs, children received a mathematical question to solve and set off excitedly on a number hunt to find the card with the answer. They reported back to the teacher with the answer and this helped the teacher to assess how well the children were learning. Each question for each pair of children was carefully matched their ability and adjusted to challenge children further as they completed each question. Children's keenness to take part in the activity and the carefully regulated level of challenge ensured that they made rapid progress.
- Children behave exceptionally well because all adults foster very good relationships with them through purposeful and engaging activities that are entirely appropriate to their stage of development.
- Flooding difficulties have prevented the outside area from being developed to its full potential. However, problems have now been solved and plans are being implemented to make full use of it as a rich learning space for young children but these have not yet been fulfilled.

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	118198
Local authority	Isle of Wight
Inspection number	448804

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	192
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nigel Blair
Headteacher	Timothy Eccles
Date of previous school inspection	4–5 November 2009
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Email address	admin@holycrossrcpri.iow.scu.uk

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