

# Holy Cross RC Primary School

Dean Lane, Bedminster, Bristol BS3 1DB

## Inspection dates

3–4 November 2015

## Overall effectiveness

**Inadequate**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an inadequate school

- School leadership has been inadequate for several years. Leaders have failed to take action to raise standards.
- As a result of weak leadership, outcomes for pupils are inadequate. Not enough pupils are making good enough progress in reading, writing or mathematics. This is especially so for pupils in Years 1 and 2, and for disadvantaged pupils and boys.
- Outcomes for pupils are not good enough because the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate. Teachers' expectations are low. Teachers fail to take into account what pupils can and cannot do. The work planned, particularly for the most-able pupils, is not challenging enough.
- Teachers do not consistently provide adequate feedback to pupils. As a result, too many pupils do not know what they need to do in order to improve their work.
- Subject leaders do not have the experience or training to check the progress that pupils are making in the subjects that they are responsible for. The good practice of the most effective teachers is not shared with weaker colleagues.
- Pupils behave well around the school. However, they become bored and restless in lessons because much of the teaching does not inspire or motivate them.
- Leaders have failed to tackle weaknesses raised at the last inspection. They have not introduced reliable methods to check and evaluate pupils' progress. Underachievement in writing remains a major weakness.
- Parents have valid concerns about the lack of permanent leadership.

### The school has the following strengths

- Since the start of this academic year, the acting headteacher has provided teachers with useful guidance and support.
- Pupils are well cared for and are happy to come to school. This is reflected in improved attendance.
- With limited support, the early years leader has begun to raise the quality of provision and outcomes for children.
- Governors have not shied away from tackling the inadequate performance of leaders.

## Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

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

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
  - rapidly securing permanent leadership for the school
  - setting clear priorities which are checked and evaluated by all leaders, including governors, to ensure that actions taken are working well and bringing about the necessary improvements
  - implementing a robust, structured programme of development and support to equip subject leaders with the skills needed to be highly effective leaders
  - ensuring that the subjects taught are well planned and effectively cover all areas of learning.
  
- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that all teachers:
  - have a robust and structured programme of training to develop their practice rapidly
  - accurately assess what pupils can and cannot do to inform planning so that learning is sufficiently challenging for all pupils, especially the more able
  - question effectively in order to assess, probe and deepen pupils' learning
  - provide pupils with high-quality feedback to enable them to understand how they can improve their work
  - learn from the best practice within the school and in other schools identified as being highly effective in raising pupils' outcomes.
  
- Urgently improve pupils' outcomes by ensuring that:
  - teachers raise their expectations of what pupils are able to achieve, especially in Years 1 and 2, and for boys across the school
  - the most-able pupils are given activities that inspire, excite and challenge them to think more deeply about their learning
  - disadvantaged pupils receive more effective support to meet their individual needs.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate

- Since the last inspection, the school has suffered from poor leadership. Consequently, its overall effectiveness is inadequate. The school has not tackled swiftly enough the areas identified as needing improvement.
- There is currently no substantive leadership in the school and this is significantly hampering progress. The acting headteacher demonstrates a strong determination and resilience to turn the school around and has the support of the staff, governors and parents. She is working hard to improve teaching and raise pupils' achievement. She is making effective use of guidance from local school leaders, the local authority and the diocese. However, there is insufficient impact from this work at this stage.
- The school's self-evaluation of its effectiveness is inaccurate. Although leaders and governors recognise that significant improvement is required, their development plan is not fit for purpose. It does not identify strategic steps that need to be taken. It does not focus sharply enough on the key areas that need to improve swiftly. The plan does not make clear how and when leaders will check the progress being made towards meeting important improvement targets. There is no evidence of leaders setting a clear future direction or communicating a vision for the school.
- The use of pupil premium funding and the impact it has on disadvantaged pupils is not effective. Monitoring of this funding by leaders, including governors, is not sufficiently rigorous to ensure that these pupils make the best possible progress. As a result, pupils entitled to this additional funding achieve standards much lower than their peers in school, or when compared with pupils nationally.
- There is no leader in place to ensure that there is a logical and consistent framework to help teachers plan a suitable range of subjects. This results in a significant loss of opportunities for pupils to progress in their learning across all subjects.
- The school provides a wide range of sessions and additional activities to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Opportunities to take part in a wide variety of after-school sessions, such as a cookery club, making lanterns for a forthcoming event in the local community and enjoying theatre trips, help to support pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development. The school is effectively developing pupils' understanding of different cultures in other countries. For example, the school has effective links with Nepal, which involve exchanging emails. As a result, the pupils have good relationships with their peers in Nepal and an increasing knowledge and understanding of what it is like to live there. Pupils talk with confidence about different cultures and religions. They understand and value that everyone is different.
- Sports funding is used effectively to provide a range of additional opportunities including basketball and rugby. These activities are well attended and pupils really enjoy taking part in matches with other schools across the city.
- The school should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.
- **The governance of the school**
  - Although governors have spent significant time tackling poor leadership, they have not succeeded in improving pupils' achievement. Consequently, there has been a significant decline in the effectiveness of the school since the last inspection. Governors recognise the weaknesses of the school and have an understanding of how its performance compares with schools locally and nationally. However, they have not ensured that weaknesses are being tackled robustly. As a result of the frequent changes in leadership and the various interim arrangements that have been required, governors have not had the opportunity to routinely monitor the performance of teachers. Consequently, governors have not been able to systematically and effectively hold leaders to account for the progress of the school. Although governors, and in particular the Chair of the Governing Body, have worked closely with the local authority and diocese, the school remains without a permanent headteacher or leadership team.
  - The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff are fully aware of the procedures to follow should they have any concerns about the safety or care of pupils. Training is carefully planned to ensure that staff fully understand and apply current guidance. The acting headteacher engages well with parents and other agencies to ensure that pupils are safe. Almost all parents who were spoken to, or responded to the Parent View survey, feel that their children are safe.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate

- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can do are not high enough. Consequently, the progress pupils are making in reading, writing and mathematics is not good enough.
- Teachers' planning does not take into account what pupils can and cannot do. All too often, work is either too easy or does not provide sufficient support for those who need it. The most-able pupils often complete work that does not make them think or extend their knowledge. For example, in a mathematics lesson, they were asked to complete an exercise that they were able to do mentally without having to think. Pupils talk about how they often find work too easy and are not required to think more deeply about their learning. This is stopping them from making the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers are not consistently applying the school's marking and feedback policy. Consequently, pupils do not always understand what they have done well and how they can improve their work further. When feedback is provided, pupils do not routinely respond by improving their next piece of work.
- The subject knowledge of teachers and learning support assistants is not always secure. For example, in a lesson where pupils learned about letters and the sounds they make (phonics), sounds were taught incorrectly.
- Questioning is not effective in probing pupils' understanding or making them think more deeply about their learning. This is resulting in too many pupils making inadequate progress.
- Assessment procedures are not sufficiently robust or accurate. They do not provide the necessary information for teachers to plan learning opportunities that will meet the needs of different groups of pupils. As a result, they do not make enough progress.
- Learning support assistants (LSAs) do provide some helpful support to pupils. For example, newly arrived pupils who are learning to speak English are well supported and respond positively. This allows them to settle quickly and gain confidence in their communication skills. However, not all LSAs are deployed as well as they could be during lessons to support learning.
- Some effective teaching is evident in the school. This teaching is carefully planned and inspires the pupils, allowing them to make good progress. However, this good practice is not shared well enough within the school to improve the overall quality of teaching.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils say that there is some bullying in the school. However, they also comment that it is often quickly dealt with by adults. They have a good understanding of different forms of bullying, including cyber bullying.
- The breakfast club is well attended by pupils of all ages. Pupils told inspectors that the club is 'loads of fun having your friends around'. Healthy food choices are available which provide pupils with a good start to the day.
- Pupils feel safe at the school. They are well cared for and nurtured. Staff know pupils extremely well. Pupils describe how they appreciate having the confidence to share any concerns they may have with school staff. Staff listen carefully and respond to their concerns, making pupils feel secure.
- The school works positively with outside agencies to support pupils on how to keep mentally healthy and to live healthy lifestyles. Consequently, some of the more vulnerable pupils feel well supported in school.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning require improvement because they resort to restlessness and fidgeting when they become bored in lessons. This is because they are not challenged or motivated and they start to talk over the teacher and fiddle with objects on their table.
- Until recently, attendance levels were too low. The school's family link worker is now tackling attendance issues, including persistent absenteeism and lateness. As a result, attendance rates are now improving and are currently above national averages. Nevertheless, the school is not monitoring the attendance of different groups of pupils well enough and the persistent absence of some remains too high.

- Pupils are courteous and polite. They behave well moving around the school at playtimes and lunchtimes and generally play happily together during these times. A group of pupils described playtimes as 'sometimes mad, sometimes hectic, but always fun'.

## Outcomes for pupils

## are inadequate

- Although the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check rose significantly in 2015 to above average, outcomes for most pupils in reading are inadequate. Pupils report how they do not always enjoy reading. This lack of enjoyment is reflected in the weak achievement of pupils at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. In the 2015 national test, Year 2 pupils' reading skills were significantly below those of all pupils nationally. Boys' achievement in reading continues to decline. Girls' reading is improving but still remains below national averages. Achievement in Year 6 also shows that pupils' achievement in reading remains below that of their peers nationally. Current standards demonstrate that pupils are not making rapid enough progress in lessons.
- The achievement pupils make in writing is inadequate. In the 2015 national tests, Year 2 pupils continued to achieve below their peers nationally. Pupils' outcomes in Year 6 improved from 2014 and for the first time they achieved above other pupils nationally. However, progress in writing across the school remains weak.
- Pupils' achievement in mathematics is inadequate. In the 2015 national tests, in Year 2, achievement declined, with pupils continuing to achieve below those nationally. Similarly, in Year 6, pupils continue to achieve below their peers nationally. Current standards are still not good enough in mathematics; in particular, boys in Years 1 and 2 do not make enough progress.
- Pupils make better progress in Years 3 to 6, particularly in reading. However, leaders do not show the capacity to build on this relative strength so that good progress becomes the norm for all.
- Disadvantaged pupils, who are entitled to support through the pupil premium, make very little progress. The gap between the outcomes for this group of pupils and their peers, both within the school and nationally, remains too large. Consequently, this group continues to underachieve significantly, especially so in Years 1 and 2 and in reading and writing.
- The most-able pupils, especially in Years 1 and 2, are not sufficiently challenged to enable them to make the best possible progress. In 2015, not enough pupils achieved the higher levels in reading, writing or mathematics. In older year groups, there is evidence of some improvement. However, this is not sufficiently well established, nor are expectations high enough, to secure good enough achievement for the brightest pupils.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs receive good support for their social and emotional development. As a result, some pupils are making reasonable progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Children start school able to communicate and express their feelings with adults and their friends in class. They enjoy sharing books and make marks on paper with growing confidence. As a result of improving teaching in the early years, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development increased significantly in 2015 and matches national averages.

## Early years provision

## requires improvement

- Leaders have correctly identified that the inside and outside learning environments need improving. A new, bespoke early years classroom is in the process of being built and plans are in place to develop the outside learning space to further improve provision and raise children's progress.
- Despite the challenges of the present environment, staff make best use of available space. They provide a range of interesting activities, which effectively covers all areas of learning. For example, children were observed practising their early writing skills, happily acting out the role of the fire service. They carefully recorded their telephone calls in the 'fire station' which had been set up outside.
- The early years leader, who was new to this post in 2014, quickly and accurately evaluated provision and identified what improvements were required. As a result, the quality of provision rose in 2015 so that the proportion of children achieving a good level of development improved significantly and was in line with children nationally. This recent improvement ensures that children are better prepared for the move into Year 1 than in the past. However, children's current progress from their starting points is not yet good.

- The early years leader demonstrates a determination to constantly improve. She regularly and robustly analyses assessment information in order to check how well children are doing. Activities planned provide children with the opportunity to practise these skills and move their learning on.
- Children in the early years are quickly helped to develop their personal skills and polite behaviour. There are well-developed routines, which the children understand and apply consistently. As a result, children quickly respond to instructions given by any member of the early years team.
- Children are well cared for by adults. Staff are appropriately trained in all aspects of child safety. They are vigilant and know how to report any concerns they may have.
- Relationships between staff and children are strong and enable these youngsters to settle quickly into school life. Children are well cared for and this allows them to thrive and develop in an environment where they feel safe and nurtured.
- The introduction of an electronic learning journal has helped parents be more involved in their children's learning. They report that it helps them to support their children with their learning at home. They also comment how staff provide a well-structured and caring environment in which their children flourish.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	109244
<b>Local authority</b>	Bristol
<b>Inspection number</b>	10005706

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	197
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Chris Fayers
<b>Headteacher</b>	Monica Cross
<b>Telephone number</b>	0117 3772199
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.holycross.bristol.sch.uk">www.holycross.bristol.sch.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:schoolholycross@bristol-schools.uk">schoolholycross@bristol-schools.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	24–25 November 2011

## Information about this school

- Holy Cross RC Primary is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The interim headteacher, in post until December 2015, was absent for the duration of this inspection. Another interim headteacher, seconded part-time from a local school, was in post between February 2015 and May 2015. The acting headteacher, who is the school's special educational needs leader, took up post in June 2015.
- A national leader of education has provided some leadership support from January 2015 until the end of July 2015.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding is just below the national average. This is additional government funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are in the care of the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is higher than the national average.
- Over half of pupils attending the school come from different minority ethnic groups.
- Children in the early years are taught in one class on a full-time basis.
- A breakfast club is run by the school.
- The school meets the current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons or part lessons in all classrooms and all year groups, many of which were joint observations with the acting headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the acting headteacher, staff and governors. In addition, meetings took place with officers from the local authority, the diocese and an interim headteacher who worked with the school earlier in the academic year. A telephone call conversation took place with the current interim headteacher, who was not in school during the inspection. Inspectors took into consideration the responses of seven questionnaires completed by staff.
- A wide range of documentation was scrutinised during the inspection, including: the school's development plan, the school's evaluation of its own performance and data relating to pupils' attainment and progress.
- The quality of work in pupils' books was scrutinised by the inspection team.
- Inspectors talked with groups of pupils to seek their views about the school. The views of other pupils were gathered during lessons, playtimes and lunchtimes. Inspectors listened to pupils read.
- The 27 responses to the online survey Parent View were taken into account. Inspectors also spoke to parents informally at the start of the day.

## Inspection team

Jen Southall, lead inspector  
Heather Barraclough  
Linda Rowley

Her Majesty's Inspector  
Ofsted Inspector  
Ofsted Inspector



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