

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School

Daiglen Drive, South Okendon, Essex RM15 5RP

Inspection dates	11–12 May 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- School leaders have improved teaching and pupils' outcomes since the last inspection, so they are now good, particularly in reading and writing. Pupils leave the school well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Governance is a strength. It ensures that the quality of education continues to improve and meets the needs of the community.
- Attendance is excellent; pupils rarely miss a day of their education. Parents are highly supportive and ensure their children attend school and are on time.
- Pupils are unfailingly polite, courteous and friendly with each other and adults. This is a very harmonious school; everyone wants to learn and achieve their best.
- Good teaching ensures that pupils consistently present their work to a very high standard.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability are provided for well. Adults carefully monitor their progress. They achieve well academically and personally.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as other pupils nationally in reading and writing. Leaders use additional funds to good effect.
- Children start well in the early years. They enjoy a wide range of learning activities in stimulating environments. Consequently, they make good progress and acquire good learning habits.
- Safeguarding procedures and processes are effective and kept in meticulous order.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although pupils achieve well in mathematics overall, the progress of pupils slows in lower key stage 2.
- Opportunities for pupils to apply their understanding of mathematical concepts are sometimes overlooked.
- Teachers' explanations are sometimes unclear.
- The most-able pupils are not provided with sufficient opportunities for them to excel.
- The best teaching practice is not fully shared and replicated across the school. Some inconsistencies in teaching remain as a result.
- Leaders' checks on the quality of teaching and learning in subjects such as science, history and geography lack the rigour evident in other subjects.
- Leaders do not review the impact of school improvement actions with enough precision.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes by accelerating the progress of pupils' learning in mathematics in lower key stage 2.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning further by:
 - ensuring that teachers' explanations are clear and that they show a secure understanding of the subject content
 - improving the teaching of mathematics, so that pupils have the opportunity to deepen their skills and apply their understanding of mathematical concepts
 - making sure that the most-able pupils are set challenging work that enables them to excel
 - sharing the good practice evident in teaching to ensure that the few remaining inconsistencies are eradicated.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management by:
 - improving the rigour with which the quality of teaching and the impact on pupils' progress are checked in science, history and geography
 - making sure that the actions taken to improve the school are reviewed routinely and precisely to check which are having the most impact on improving teaching and pupils' outcomes.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Since the last inspection, the school's leaders have secured substantial improvements. Leaders continue to improve the quality of teaching and raise the standards of education for the pupils in their school community. Senior leaders have an accurate and thorough view of the strengths and areas for improvement. They are dedicated to the academic and personal success of every pupil.
- Leaders ensure that opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education and values are woven into every aspect of school life. Pupils know and apply the school values of respect, honesty, tolerance, justice and forgiveness on a daily basis. The school is harmonious and purposeful as a result.
- The leadership of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is highly effective. From the point of identification, leaders work well with individuals and families to give pupils precise and effective support. Leaders ensure that staff are well trained to meet individual needs well. All pupils are closely monitored for both academic and personal progress and have equal access to the same provision as others. As a result, pupils who have special educational needs or disability and those who have an education, health and care plan make good progress from their individual starting points.
- Performance management of staff is effective. Leaders have set targets for staff that are ambitious. Leaders identify and ensure a well-developed culture of regular training for adults that is considered and thorough. As a result, there is more accountability for the achievement of pupils in school, together with a greater sharing of key roles within the school. The staff who responded to the staff online questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive about the changes for the better at the school, and how proud they are to be a member of staff.
- The leadership team uses additional pupil premium funding well. Leaders have a thorough understanding of the barriers that disadvantaged pupils in their school face and use the additional funds to provide support that is carefully planned and evaluated. The achievement of disadvantaged pupils continues to improve. In 2015, the proportion of pupils at key stage 2 who made better than expected progress in reading and writing was above that of both their classmates and other pupils nationally. Attendance for disadvantaged pupils has improved and is equally high as that of others.
- A few parents raised concerns about the turnover of teaching staff at the school. Inspectors found that their children are continuing to learn well because leaders monitor the quality of teaching in English and mathematics rigorously and regularly. As a result, leaders have clear information regarding the attainment and progress of each individual pupil so they can assure themselves that changes in staff do not impact on a pupil's chances of success.
- Although leaders ensure that the curriculum is broad and balanced, they are not fully checking the impact of teaching on the progress of pupils in subjects such as science, history and geography. At times, the quality of teaching can vary in these subjects. For example, in science, teaching can be less challenging for the younger, most-able pupils.
- Although leaders have an accurate view of the school's overall performance and where pupils are in their learning, they do not routinely check the positive impact of their decisions and actions. Consequently, they can have a number of strategies in use, for example for marking and feedback, without knowing which one has the most impact for both pupils and staff.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - is a strength. Governors have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development. They hold school leaders to account effectively for the standard of education of all pupils
 - makes sure that the school's resources, including additional government funding, are used for pupils' benefit. Governors are vigilant, checking that funding is being used to support disadvantaged pupils in their learning. They have firm plans to sustain the provision following a drop in pupil numbers
 - is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity, and is successfully promoting tolerance and encouraging good relationships. Governors ensure that pupils respect and value diversity. The positive and respectful ethos that permeates the school ensures that pupils are well prepared for life in a modern democracy.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders provide staff with effective safeguarding training that is relevant and specific to the context of the school. The new Family Support Worker provides help and support to parents. For example, a recent workshop on keeping children safe when using the internet was well attended. All staff and governors have received training on the Prevent duty as part of the leaders' promotion of a culture of vigilance. The governors regularly check the school's work on safeguarding to satisfy themselves that all the necessary documentation and work with other agencies are in good order. Inspectors agree with the view of the governors that safeguarding is a strength of the school. All checks on the suitability of staff to work with children are rigorously carried out, and records are meticulously kept.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- School leaders have improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment since the last inspection and it is now good.
- Teachers insist on the highest standard of presentation for pupils in their work. Consequently, pupils take great care over their work and are proud of their results. Pupils' exercise books, in all subjects, are exceptionally well presented.
- In English, teachers have a good grasp of the skills that the pupils need to acquire. They plan learning opportunities that meet the needs of most of the pupils well. Older pupils write maturely, using increasingly complex vocabulary.
- The work of teaching assistants is highly effective when working in one-to-one situations or with small groups. Teaching assistants are clear about their role and clearly understand the needs of the pupils they are working with. They have good knowledge of the subjects in which they provide support. For example, one teaching assistant was seen carefully reminding a pupil about the strategies required for the individual to be successful when practising sounds and phonics.
- Teachers encourage pupils to continue their learning at home. Parents are very supportive of their children's learning and homework is completed well. Younger pupils regularly practise their reading skills both in school and at home. The pupils spoken to were keen to read. Younger pupils were able to use their knowledge and understanding of sounds exceptionally well to blend and read unfamiliar words. Outcomes in phonics are improving and in reading, the standard pupils reach is above national expectations.
- Teachers often make good use of questioning to check pupils' understanding and, at times, to challenge them to think more deeply. They also provide pupils with a variety of opportunities to work individually, in pairs or in groups. In one geography lesson, pupils engaged with enthusiasm and enjoyed being given the opportunity to use atlases to locate countries in Europe and then write about their findings. Nevertheless, occasionally the most-able pupils do not reach their full potential because work set in subjects such as mathematics, science, history and geography lacks challenge.
- The teaching of mathematics is less consistent in lower key stage 2 than elsewhere. This is because adults' explanations and questions do not deepen pupils' understanding sufficiently well. Consequently, for some pupils, their progress in mathematics starts to slow down. Leaders are aware of this and are taking action. Where teaching is clearly explained and pupils have the opportunity to apply their understanding and skills, they make good progress in mathematics.
- Through their rigorous monitoring and support, leaders continue to improve teachers' practice and reduce the variability in the quality of learning. Even so, opportunities to share good teaching practices in order to eradicate these inconsistencies fully remain overlooked.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- School leaders ask pupils to share their views regularly about how to improve their school. One pupil told inspectors about their delight that new play equipment had been bought as a result of pupils sharing their views maturely and respectfully. Pupils are developing well into thoughtful and caring citizens.

- Pupils have a very mature understanding of risk. When they participate in school trips or other events, they are given the opportunity to write about the potential risks and ways in which to keep safe. For example, the children in Reception were given the opportunity to consider and write about how to keep safe on their recent cinema trip.
- Pupils are given many opportunities to develop their emotional well-being. In one lesson where pupils were discussing feelings, they readily spoke with their classmates about when they may feel sad or worried and what to do with these feelings. The pupils listened well to each other and presented their own views maturely and articulately.
- Pupils demonstrate a mature understanding of keeping themselves safe. One pupil told inspectors 'safety is something we learn about through our core values'. Pupils have an accurate view of different forms of bullying and were adamant that should any form of bullying occur, then adults would deal with it swiftly and effectively.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Their enthusiasm for learning, together with their excellent relationships with each other, ensure that lessons proceed without any interruption or distraction. Pupils told inspectors how much they enjoy their learning.
- Pupils are very proud of their school and value the education they receive. Consequently, they rarely miss a day and attendance is outstanding. Parents are very supportive of the school and almost all agree that pupils' behaviour and conduct are a strength.
- Over the course of the inspection, inspectors were greeted respectfully and courteously by every pupil irrespective of age. Pupils were unfailingly polite. School records, which indicate very few incidents of poor behaviour or rudeness, show that this is the norm at Holy Cross. Inspectors observed pupils playing exceptionally well together and speaking with any adult with the same respect and courtesy. Pupils' conduct during less structured times, such as playtimes and lunchtimes, is exceptionally friendly and social.
- Additional adults provide highly effective support for the very few pupils who require assistance with behaviour choices. This results in a calm and purposeful environment in which all pupils can thrive.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- The school's leaders have improved outcomes over the past two years and these are now good. Pupils are better prepared for the next stage of their education as a result. A scrutiny of pupils' work and analysis of the school's assessment information indicate that currently, most pupils are making progress in their learning at least at the expected rate or even better for their age.
- Since the previous inspection, the achievement of pupils in reading has risen at both key stages 1 and 2. Standards are well above those expected nationally by the end of Year 6. This academic year, both school assessment information and inspection evidence demonstrate that this is set to continue.
- Pupils left Holy Cross in 2015 with writing, grammar, punctuation and spelling skills that were well above those expected nationally for their age. All groups of pupils made strong progress over time in these subjects. Pupils who had previously been low-attaining pupils, for example, made significantly more progress than pupils nationally. The focus on making sure that pupils continually produce high-quality written work is still a school priority.
- Pupils have opportunities to present information orally. Adults place a high priority on developing strong speaking and listening skills from a young age. Consequently, pupils are articulate and use a good range of vocabulary grammatically in their writing.
- In mathematics, pupils achieve well overall. Almost all pupils reached the expected levels of attainment in Year 6 in 2015. However, progress in mathematics currently across the school is variable. It slows in lower key stage 2. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to use and apply their mathematical understanding.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve well, particularly in reading and writing. At key stage 2 in 2015 for example, all disadvantaged pupils achieved at least the expected standard in reading. The proportion who achieved the higher Level 5 in reading was above the proportion of other pupils that did so nationally. School leaders ensure that the pupil premium is used to good effect and, as a result, disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as other pupils.

- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make good progress from their individual starting points, which are often considerably lower than those of other pupils in school. This is due to the effective support that they receive, such as the additional literacy and numeracy sessions provided for them.
- The achievement of the most-able pupils can vary across the school and particularly in the case of younger pupils. Expectations of their achievement are sometimes too low. Opportunities to extend and challenge their learning are sometimes not planned well enough or are missed in some subjects, such as science, history and geography.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language receive strong support and often make exceptional progress in their learning.

Early years provision

is good

- Children enter the early years with individual skills and abilities that are broadly in line with those of others nationally of a similar age. They get off to a flying start because adults provide stimulating learning opportunities that capture the interests of these young children. Consequently, children make good progress. By the time children leave the early years, an above-average proportion reach a good level of development.
- The leadership of the early years provision is strong. All adults receive training and development that are specific to early years. Consequently, support staff are effective when working with small groups of children either outside or in the classroom. In one lesson seen, the member of staff was using every opportunity to encourage children to practise their counting skills.
- In the part-time Nursery class, children are happy, well cared for and safe. They participate in the wide range of activities. Children listen attentively to stories and instructions when required. They enjoy the roles and responsibilities they are given such as tidying up. The children are appropriately challenged and achieving well in their acquisition of early reading, writing and number.
- The outdoor areas are used well to extend and encourage children to play and explore. For example, in the outdoor sandpit, some children were engaged in imaginary play. They chose their resources carefully as part of their play and spoke well and maturely with each other as they extended their ideas and vocabulary. Children are developing an enjoyment and keen interest in a wide range of learning activities.
- The children are inquisitive, confident and articulate. They speak with interest about a broad range of topics. When finding an activity that interests them, they show strong skills in perseverance, which helps them to develop good behaviour for learning. In a computing lesson, some children were designing a picture to show the lifecycle of a butterfly. They worked hard, explaining each step using the correct scientific vocabulary. One child proudly said, 'it turns from a chrysalis or cocoon into a butterfly, look at the arrows I have drawn to help you'.
- Children are very keen learners who enjoy good relationships with each other. They readily participate in reading, writing and number work. Activities are stimulating and build on the children's interests. As a result, children leave Reception ready for the challenges of Year 1.

School details

Unique reference number	115181
Local authority	Thurrock
Inspection number	10011788

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	303
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Frankie Chissim
Headteacher	Maria Shepherd
Telephone number	01708 853000
Website	www.holycrossprimary.com
Email address	office@holycrossprimary.thurrock.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	26–27 February 2014

Information about this school

- Holy Cross Catholic Primary School is a larger than the average primary school with some year groups that are one and a half form entry.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is lower than the national figure. The percentage of pupils who require statements of special educational needs or education, health and care plans is higher than the national figure.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is average. This is additional government funding to support pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or children who are looked after by the local authority.
- A higher than average proportion of pupils leave or join the school at other than the usual times.
- The proportion of pupils who come from minority ethnic groups and whose first language is not English is much higher than the national figure and is rising.
- Children in the Nursery class attend part time in the mornings. Children in Reception Year attend full time.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 29 lessons, two of which were jointly observed with senior leaders. Inspectors carried out three focused learning walks to evaluate the quality of learning at different points and in different subjects. One of these was jointly carried out with a senior leader.
- The team held meetings with the headteacher, senior and other key leaders, and members of the governing body. A telephone conversation was held with a local authority consultant.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils and looked at books to take account of the work and the progress that pupils make over time.
- The team observed pupils during play and the lunch break, and spoke formally with a group to gain their views of behaviour and welfare in the school. Inspectors listened to some pupils read.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and school strategic improvement plan. In addition, the school's systems for assessing, tracking and evaluating pupils' progress were examined.
- Policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils and the arrangements for pupils who have special educational needs or disability were examined. The school's processes for checking on the suitability of staff who work at the school were also scrutinised.
- Inspectors took account of 71 responses from parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, together with 30 free-text responses and informal conversations on the playground.
- Inspectors analysed 24 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Kim Hall, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Amanda Godfrey	Ofsted Inspector
Pauline Macmillan	Ofsted Inspector
Nicholas Rudman	Ofsted Inspector

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