

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School

Stonesby Avenue, Leicester LE2 6TY

Inspection dates

19–20 May 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, leaders have not brought about enough improvements to teaching, especially in writing and mathematics. Hence, pupils' progress in key stages 1 and 2 is not good.
- Although leaders know how each pupil is progressing, senior leaders do not have effective systems for checking and comparing the progress of different pupil groups. Consequently, governors do not always have the information they need to hold senior leaders to account for the progress of different groups.
- Mathematics and English leaders in key stages 1 and 2 have not been effective enough in their work to improve teaching and pupils' progress.
- Too many pupils are regularly late for school or absent.
- Teachers do not always give pupils clear guidance about what is expected in lessons and how to improve their work. This means that some pupils do not make good progress.
- Sometimes lessons lack the challenge needed to maintain pupils' interest. As a result, standards of behaviour dip.
- Leaders do not engage well enough with parents so pupils are not fully supported in their learning.
- The school website does not meet government requirements. Hence, parents do not have access to key information.

The school has the following strengths

- All groups of children in the early years are making good progress. This is because teachers know the children well and plan work that matches their abilities and captures their interest.
- There are some pockets of good and better teaching. In these classes pupils make good progress.
- Pupils say they that enjoy coming to school because 'everyone is friendly'. Pupils are well cared for and kept safe.
- Most pupils take part in a wide range of sports. School teams are very successful in competitive events including the Leicester Schools Football Association Cup Competition.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness and impact of leadership by ensuring that there is:
 - an efficient system for checking and comparing the progress of different pupil groups, including pupils supported by the pupil premium, the most able, pupils who have special needs and disabilities and pupils learning English as an additional language
 - regular analysis and evaluation of the information gathered from leaders' checking activities in order to plan next steps
 - a sharper improvement plan with measurable mid-year check points so that governors can hold senior leaders to account
 - better information for governors about the performance of different groups of pupils so that they can check the impact of leaders' work
 - better impact from English and mathematics leaders on teaching and learning in key stages 1 and 2
 - more effective communication and partnership working with parents to support pupils' learning and development
 - stronger work with preschool settings so that children who do not attend the school's nursery attain higher standards by the end of early years
 - an up-to-date school website with all the information required by government guidelines.

- Ensure that teaching and pupils' achievement are consistently good or better, especially in mathematics and writing, by ensuring that teachers:
 - learn from the most effective practice seen in the school
 - plan lessons with the right level of challenge for pupils, especially for the most able
 - ensure that all pupils understand what they are learning and what they need to do to be successful
 - check pupils' levels of attention and progress during lessons and intervene quickly if these are not good
 - secure efficient, effective and consistent ways of helping pupils to improve their work.

- Improve attendance by reducing late arrivals and the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- The leadership and management of teaching and learning requires improvement because leaders at all levels have not done enough to secure consistently good teaching and pupil progress in key stages 1 and 2. Recent work to improve the teaching of mathematics and writing across the school is beginning to make a difference but it is not having consistently good impact across the school.
- Leaders keep careful records of how every pupil is progressing. However, senior leaders are not effective in using analysis of this information to compare the progress of different pupil groups. This means that leaders at all levels lack a secure view of what is working well and where changes need to be made to provide pupils with challenge or support.
- Because governors are not provided with clear summary information about the relative progress of pupil groups they are not able to provide effective challenge in this area or question the impact of any additional support provided. There is a similar picture of limited analysis and evaluation in some other aspects of leadership. For example, information gathered on pupil's behaviour and attendance is not always well used to identify successes and next steps for further improvement.
- The school improvement plan requires improvement because it does not provide senior leaders and governors with measurable ways of checking whether the school is on track for its end of year targets. Governors are not able to make mid-year checks and to hold senior leaders to account for ensuring that there is rapid and sustained improvement.
- The improvements in the quality of teaching in writing and mathematics are a result of staff benefiting from training and support brokered by the local authority rather than from the impact of the school's key stage 1 and 2 English and mathematics leaders. Although these leaders are aware of the improvements needed, they are not having sufficient impact on the quality of teaching across their key stages.
- The school's partnership with parents requires improvement. Some parents are unhappy about aspects of how the school is led and managed. Leaders appreciate this and know that they have more to do to engage with a larger proportion of parents.
- Since the last inspection, leaders have improved the provision for teaching computing by ensuring that equipment is used fully and staff have better guidance. Pupils now say they have regular opportunities to learn new computing skills. Pupils report that they like using handheld devices because they enable them 'to carry out research in the classroom and this helps their topics'. Leaders acknowledge that more work is needed to improve the curriculum in order to deepen skills and knowledge in a wider range of subjects including science.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. Pupils have a good understanding of British values. During the inspection, the oldest pupils explained how they respect and welcome pupils who have different languages, beliefs and backgrounds. Pupils are being well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The school offers a good range of extra-curricular activities. These are very well attended by pupils and contribute well to enriching their experiences, building their confidence and ability to work well in a team.
- The new special educational needs coordinator has identified the right priorities for improvement and is addressing these systematically. She is ensuring more rigorous assessments of pupils' starting points so that leaders have a better understanding of how well additional help is making a difference to pupils' progress.
- The school's additional sports funding is well managed, wisely spent and carefully evaluated. The funds are increasing pupil participation in physical activity and providing training for staff to improve the quality of teaching in physical education. The profile of sport in the school is now high. During the inspection, key stage 2 pupils were very proud and keen to tell of their achievements in competitive sporting events with other schools.
- The weaknesses in leaders' systems for checking the progress of different pupil groups means that leaders do not have a precise understanding of how much difference is made by the additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils.
- The local authority provides regular and effective support for the school. This is carefully matched to the school's priorities. It includes links with other schools, and support to improve writing, early years and mathematics. School staff welcome this support and are positive about its impact on teaching.

■ The governance of the school

- Governors have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning. Through their carefully planned programme of school visits and working alongside leaders, they have a sound understanding of what has been achieved and the further improvements needed. Governors are, rightly, 'impatient' to see more rapid, sustained improvement in teaching and progress across the school.
 - Governors are committed to ensuring that there is better communication and partnership with parents. A start has been made with plans for strengthening links with parents in the early years, but this area remains a priority in order to gain the confidence and support of more parents.
 - Information on the school's website does not comply with government requirements, so parents do not have access to some important information.
 - Minutes from governing body meetings show that governors often ask challenging questions. However, evidence of governors following up these areas and holding senior leaders to account is not so clear. This is partly because senior leaders' plans for improvement and the information they provide for governors is not always sufficiently precise.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff are aware of the procedures they should follow when they have concerns. Detailed records demonstrate work to support pupils and their families through collaboration with various agencies. Leaders are persistent in following up concerns to ensure that pupils get the help and support needed. Staff safeguarding training requirements are met.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Although there have been some improvements in teaching since the last inspection, it is still not consistently good in either key stage 1 or key stage 2, because the most effective practice is not shared and embedded across all classes.
- Leaders are aware that there is still much work to be done in order to secure consistent and effective implementation of the recently adopted approach to teaching mathematics. In some classes, especially in key stage 1, middle- and higher-attaining pupils spend too long waiting for other pupils to finish before they can move on to the next task. This was seen during the inspection as these pupils completed simple tasks very quickly and then played with equipment as they waited for their classmates to finish.
- Pupils' books from some key stage 2 classes show that some teachers are much more effective at meeting the needs of different groups. For example, some able Year 6 pupils explained that 'maths is a little bit hard and after a couple of days it gets easier'. These pupils say they are often expected to explain their reasoning to their partners and they find this challenging.
- Similarly, in writing, teachers do not always take sufficient account of pupils' capabilities when planning lessons. Work in key stage 1 writing books shows that, too often, the expectations of the most able and middle-attaining pupils are very similar. In a lesson about reading instructions, pupils spent most of the time colouring in, cutting out and sticking together a picture. All groups of pupils were clear that the work was 'too easy'.
- As a result of recent staff training, some teachers are developing effective ways of encouraging pupils to use 'checklists' as tools to take greater responsibility for improving their work in lessons. This was seen during the inspection when pupils in a key stage 2 class used these very well to ensure that they had included conjunctions and correct punctuation in their writing from the point of view of a book character. At the end of the session, pupils also used them to check and to improve their partner's work. One pupil patiently explained that 'you need a comma after a subordinating clause'. This led to the pupil making corrections which improved the piece of writing.
- The quality and impact of feedback to pupils is very variable. In some classes, mostly in key stage 2, teachers are quick to pick up and address misconceptions and to provide challenge for pupils during lessons. Pupils respond well to these interventions and show real pride and pleasure in their increased achievements. Most teachers spend time providing regular written comments in pupils' books but the impact that these make on pupils' progress is very variable across the school.
- The teaching of grammar, spelling and punctuation is a strength of the school. This is because teachers have good knowledge and find effective ways of sharing this through pupils' day-to-day writing activities. Hence pupils are frequently expected to apply new learning and standards are in line with national expectations.
- The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) is good. This is because it is regular and

systematic from the early years. As a result pupils have a good foundation for their reading and are confident when tackling unfamiliar words. Pupils say that they enjoy reading and that they especially like the class books that are used as a basis for English lessons.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupil's personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils have good social development because all staff work well to support this area from the children's very first days in school. Children are taught to share, take turns and be patient, tolerant and respectful.
- Pupils say that they enjoy school because it is very friendly. Pupils also report that they appreciate the 'Sunshine Room' because it 'helps children to understand and manage their feelings'.
- Pupils can explain how to stay safe on the internet. They know exactly what to do if they have a concern about a website or if they are worried about online bullying.
- Pupils understand that there are different types of bullying, including racism. Pupils say there are incidents of bullying but they trust staff to deal with any issues that arise. The inspection survey shows that pupils feel safe in school.
- Most pupils' attitudes to their work are positive and they are keen to learn. Sometimes, when pupils' attention wanders it is due to teaching which is not sufficiently engaging. Pupil's books are well presented. They show pride and care in their work.
- With the exception of some classes in key stage 2, not enough pupils have a sufficiently clear understanding of the strengths of their work and which areas they need to improve.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Attendance is below the national average and the number of pupils who are persistently absent is above the national average. The new inclusion manager has plans to improve this area through working with families and the educational welfare officer to address late arrivals and to improve attendance.
- Generally pupils listen and behave well in lessons, but this is not consistent because not all teachers intervene quickly and effectively to address behaviour that is not good enough. Most pupils regard standards of behaviour as 'acceptable' but some pupils report that unacceptable behaviour disrupts their learning.
- At playtimes and lunchtimes, most pupils chat harmoniously and enjoy playing responsibly with sports equipment. While most pupils know and follow the school expectations of behaviour, a small number of pupils are boisterous and sometimes challenging towards adults. School records and inspection evidence show that the numbers of pupils who present challenging behaviour is decreasing.
- The school is generally orderly and calm. Pupils move around corridors responsibly. Almost all pupils are polite to visitors, courteous to each other and to staff.

Outcomes for pupils require improvement

- In 2015, results for the assessments at the end of key stage 2 fell below the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6. Writing was particularly weak because it was significantly below the national average for both attainment and progress. The current picture is better. Work in pupils' writing and mathematics books and school records of assessment information indicate that progress has improved and standards are on track to achieve the government's minimum standards this year.
- Standards in the Year 1 phonics screening check improved in 2015 and were above the national average. This is because phonics teaching is effective from the early years and the key stage 1 classes build upon this learning.
- In 2015, standards in reading, writing and mathematics at key stage 1 were broadly in line with the national average. This represented good progress from the starting points of most pupils. However, pupils' current work in books does not indicate such a positive picture as at the time of the last inspection. This is because teaching in this key stage is not consistently good. Thus, pupils' progress in key stage 1 requires improvement.

- In Years 3 to 6, pupils' current work books show that progress is stronger than at the time of the last inspection. Although there is much more good progress, it is not consistently good in all classes.
- In Year 6, where the quality of teaching is consistently good, more pupils are making good and better than expected progress. The work in pupils' books and school assessment information indicates that, although standards sometimes remain below the expected levels, more pupils are working at the national expectations. Consequently, pupils are now being satisfactorily prepared for the next stage in their education.
- Leaders are aware that more needs to be done so that the most able pupils make better progress, particularly in key stage 1 and in mathematics across the school.
- In 2015, disadvantaged pupils in key stage 1 attained close to or above other pupils in their class and other pupils nationally. At key stage 2 they attained above their peers but lower than other pupils nationally. The school's information about the performance of pupils currently on roll indicates that the progress of these pupils is variable and it is strongest where teaching is most effective.
- Last year, standards of attainment at both key stage 1 and key stage 2 were lower for pupils with English as a first language than for pupils speaking English as an additional language.

Early years provision

is good

- At the end of 2015, the proportion of children in the early years reaching a good level of development was below the national average. There was a significant improvement from the previous year and the school's improvement was very strong when compared to the national rate of improvement. Inspection evidence shows that standards will remain below the national average again this year but progress is consistently strong for all groups of pupils.
- Children's knowledge and skills, especially in language, are often very limited when they enter the school's Nursery class. However, good teaching and an increasing focus on ensuring challenge for the most able is ensuring that all groups of children make strong progress from their different starting points. This good progress continues for children when they enter the school's Reception class. Hence a large proportion of the children who attend the school's nursery provision achieve well at the end of early years and are well prepared for key stage 1.
- Inspection evidence also shows that children who do not attend the nursery but who start school in the Reception class, also make good progress, though this is usually from much lower points. However, they do not attain as well as their peers who have attended the school's nursery class. Leaders, including governors, are clear that they need to ensure that these children make even better progress so they catch up more quickly. Plans are in place to strengthen working with the parents of these children and colleagues in other pre-school settings.
- The early years leader has a good understanding of the strengths at this key stage and the priorities. This is because she uses assessment information well to check the progress of different groups of children in different areas of learning. Teaching activities are then carefully selected in order to provide extra support or challenge in the areas identified as priorities.
- Children sustain good levels of concentration when they work on their own and with adults. This is because activities are well chosen to capture children's interests and are pitched at the right level. For example, a group of the most able nursery children worked on their own to make shakers. They carefully picked up dried beans and put them into numbered pots. The children enjoyed developing their counting skills as they matched the numbers of beans with the labels on the pots.
- Children in the early years are developing a love of books, a real enjoyment of stories and good understanding about the world. During snack time, Reception children listened with delight to the story of 'The very hungry caterpillar' and the transformation from chrysalis to butterfly. Then, as a result of skilled questioning from the teacher, the children were able to make links between the caterpillar's life cycle and the life cycle of the chicks which had recently been hatched in the classroom.
- Parents speak favourably about the early years provision. They say that staff help children to settle well, especially those children who are new to learning English.

School details

Unique reference number	120255
Local authority	Leicester
Inspection number	10009119

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	220
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Elizabeth Harris
Headteacher	Julia Christy
Telephone number	0116 2833135
Website	www.holycross.leicester.sch.uk
Email address	office@holycross.leicester.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	16–17 January 2014

Information about this school

- Holy Cross Catholic Primary School is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The school did not meet the government's floor standards in 2015, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school has a part-time Nursery class.
- The school has a morning club, organised and managed by the governing body.
- The proportion of pupils from an ethnic minority background is above the national average. Over a quarter of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are deemed disadvantaged and supported through the pupil premium is well above the national average. (The pupil premium funding is provided to support disadvantaged pupils, including those who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.)
- The school website does not meet requirements on the publication of information about: the content of the curriculum for each year group and subject; how parents or other members of the public can find out more about the curriculum the school is following; the impact of pupil premium funding on the attainment of pupils who attract the funding or special educational needs reporting.
- The school is working with Sandfield Close Primary School and Overdale Junior School.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all classes. Several lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher and assistant headteacher.
- Pupils' work was scrutinised together with the headteacher and assistant headteacher.
- Inspectors met with two groups of pupils to discuss how they felt about school. Inspectors also took account of 31 responses from pupils to the online inspection survey of pupils' of views.
- Inspectors observed pupils moving around the school. They observed in the playgrounds and in the dining hall. Inspectors also held informal discussions with pupils during these times.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read aloud and discussed reading with pupils.
- Inspectors held meetings school staff including senior and middle leaders. The lead inspector met with members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors also took into consideration 10 responses from the inspection online survey for staff.
- An inspector met with parents at the start and end of the first school day. Inspectors also took into account 10 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View. Inspectors considered the school's own parent surveys for the past two years.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documents, including: safeguarding records; behaviour records; attendance information; minutes of governing body meetings; governor and local authority reports; the school improvement plan and pupils' assessment information.

Inspection team

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Ofsted Inspector

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